

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

Poetry

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/674337b7>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 21(4)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

1997-09-01

**DOI**

10.17953

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**Wedding Prayer—Odali Utugi Peace Village  
—6/1—Lincoln, VT**

Strong back. Strong hands, and a will  
to match. All the words turned  
upside down, and all the words  
in the right places.

Awesomely  
energetic. Grin of a moose. Two  
feet size twelve quadruple E that can  
run uphill all day chasing  
a shadow,

and a man laughing  
all night long right behind the huge  
strawberry moon, gypsy moon, or behind  
all moons and suns, stars falling  
out of Father Sky, lonesome wandering  
planets. Fiddle player, story  
teller, boat builder, cultivator, manure  
spreader, corn-planter, in good  
action,

in right action, in great  
strong-hearted Mother Earth, dog, horse  
—little kid—all beings without  
number lover action, dancing on the rim  
of this world in intense, high-  
voltage, perpetual  
gratitude in this time, for our  
time, for this place, for our love. In this  
love

I will walk with you.  
I will stand by you.  
I will carry you  
along this beauty road.

---

J.C. Ellefson teaches writing and literature at Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont, where he coedits the literary journal, *Willard and Maple*. His poems have been published throughout North America, Great Britain, and Japan.

Through this world and to the next.

    This I bring.

    This I offer.

    This I promise

        —until the days fall apart

        —until the end of all days

        —until all the stars fall out of the sky.

    May it be so.

  —J.C. Ellefson

### **Star of the American Road**

Without our realizing it, he had become an old man—going blind and restless, always dreaming and looking for something he couldn't describe. His face and hands were wrinkled as if the veins and capillaries were about to break through his skin, as if somehow he had gotten a line and a crease for every step he had taken in his life. His wife had died years before, and his children had grown up and moved away; still, he was never alone. He loved children and children loved him, and there was often an entourage of little people—and their dogs and cats—following him everywhere he went. Whenever they were close, you could hear them all—the shouting, barking, meowing—and the old man's easy laugh. This was a way you could tell him apart from everyone—his laugh, and of course, his perpetual smile. Everyone always said this was why it happened to him when he was traveling alone in the high plains desert.

So one day he left us to visit his family way off in the west, said good-bye to the children and their dogs and cats, and there was a little crying. The dogs whined, and the cats rubbed against his legs, but the old man

only smiled, as he so often did, patted each head, rubbed each belly, and assured them all he'd come back soon. Everyone watched him as he walked away, and everyone was amazed at how easily he could cover the ground with his heavy pack. It was true he was an old man, but he was still very strong and agile, and before long he was a speck in the distance.

He walked fast those first several days and covered much ground, and sometimes he felt as though he were floating above the rocks and grasses—floating above the brush as he walked along. After several weeks of hard going, he entered a country that was new to him, but he had exhausted himself and had become feverish, so he made a camp in the blackness, built a fire out of sweet grass and sagebrush, and sat inside the smoke for a while until he felt strong again. And when he felt strong again, they came for him.

It was easy and graceful the way the three women appeared out of the smoke, and although the old man was quite surprised, he welcomed them, threw some dry wood into the center of his circle of stones, and gave them the last of his dried bread and tea. The four ate dried bread and drank tea in a circle, and the old man asked the women about the beautiful desolate country, and they told him everything they knew about the jagged hills and barren valleys until the old man felt as if he had lived there his whole life, and as though he had known the women forever.

It was then the three strangers told the old man they were the Wind, Fire, and Darkness, and that they wanted something of him. Such an odd thing to say, thought the man, but as he looked closer into their faces, he could see it was true. The woman who called herself the Wind blew her words in a great

gentle rush of breath; there was a soft red glow around the face and eyes of the woman who called herself Fire; and the old man could see—for the first time through the smoke—that the woman who called herself Darkness had no face at all. For a long time he listened to what the three proposed, and he found himself nodding, smiling occasionally, his easy laugh returning like the chorus of a song.

Finally, he agreed to their proposal, and stood up and shook their hands, and when he touched them, the Wind made his hair stand on end and made him feel weightless in the breeze; the Fire warmed his heart like he had never felt before, and his body began to give off a brilliant blue-white glow; and the Darkness entered his half-blind eyes until he could see into miles and miles of endless night.

It was in this way he began to rise from the earth. He rose from the earth with his easy smile and laugh, and waved good-bye to his three new friends. He rose until his giant glow became the small speck of light we now see when we're traveling late, and we lose our way. You see, now when we are traveling late and we lose our way, we just have to ask the star, and the Wind will tell us which way to go, or when the bone deep cold comes upon us, all we have to do is look to the star, and a warmth will come out of the very center of our hearts, or when the night envelopes us, all we have to do is think of the light in the sky, and we can see into the very bottom of darkness.

In the East many people believe this man's name was Omeka, and that he also had the power to shape-change and speak the languages of all animals, and in the south people call him Stone because of his perpetual endurance and boundless strength, but as a small boy, I was told the old man was known as Strong Heart, and this I

believe to be true, and this is how  
Strong Heart left his body in the beautiful desolate  
jagged hills of the Wind, Fire, and Darkness, and how he  
became the Star of the American Road.

—J.C. Ellefson

### Apache Tears

Sitting in the hip cafe where everything  
tastes the same, Big Joe gets in my  
face, gnaws over an alien apricot  
scone and assures me, between  
sips of his high-voltage bottomless  
coffee, that ten years ago he could have  
slit my throat, walked away, and never  
thought another thing about it.

Dysfunctional home life, says Joe. Wake up  
scared and hungry. Get beat. Peel a bloody  
shirt off your back at night. Makes you mean.

The screen door slams as we  
nod at each other, full eye  
contact—Joe, brown; me, blue.

Outside a chubby yuppie woman walks by  
pulling a smiling blonde kid and his three-  
foot pooh bear in a Radio-Flyer. Skate  
boards. Sun bright on the street.

But it would have been nothing  
personal, says Joe. It was before  
I found out about my Native blood. Half  
breed. Half badger. Half  
snapping turtle. Before I found  
my true heart. Before I  
found out how to love everybody.

He laughs too hard and too long. I  
pay the bill, but before we leave, Joe gets  
trembly, reaches deep into his pocket, pulls out  
the small round green stone

and lays it  
in the center of my hand.

If you ever need me, says Joe, you  
hold this stone. You hold this  
stone and think of me. Hold  
this stone and talk to me. Tell  
me the words as they  
fall out of your heart.

That was five years ago, and I  
haven't seen Joe since we moved  
west. Still talk to him—from time  
to time. Got a couple advanced  
psychology degrees. Good  
father. Teaches. Lives and works  
exclusively for the people.

—J.C. Ellefson

## A Sky Too Wide, An Earth Too Deep

Emanations from Sunday, June 25, 1876 A.D., a little after noon,  
near the Little Bighorn River, Montana Territory

JOURNAL - 12:06 PM

Where is Benteen? —Reno destroyed!  
Over the hills they pour— retreat!  
“No!”  
“Onward!”  
DEATH.  
The sky pukes out the Bluecoats—  
it was foretold long ago....  
“Wasichu come!”  
262 men.  
Spears.  
Guns.  
“It shall be glorious!”

(1)  
HUNGERS

“What is patriotism but the love of the good things we ate in  
our childhood?”

—Lin Yutang, American novelist, 1895-1976



-a-

When he was a child  
 young Long Hair came  
 upon an anthill. Long  
 he watched its denizens conspire  
 before him. They lay out treachery  
 in neat little rows, like pebbles  
 or seeds, the scent of fresh apple pie  
 wafted by young Long Hair  
 until he had enough, and smashed  
 the hill under his boot, for the hell  
 of it, dreaming of fresh whipped cream,  
 though mama had none (and told him so,  
 but Long Hair refused to listen).

-b-

Tashunka Witko, upon his tenth  
 birthday, had a dream: just one, of a  
 feast of buffalo passed around the  
 fire, and all the children happy even  
 frail Tashunka, agree with a piece of  
 tough, muscular tail; its bones  
 he would craft into a necklace.

(2)

-a-

## PALE CHILDREN, IN A DISTANCE, THIS WAY COME

Monday, November 28, 1864 A.D., late in the night,  
 near Sand Creek, Colorado Territory

“Kill all the Indians you come across.”

—Colonel John M. Chivington, Colorado Volunteers

As the Cheyenne slept  
 poor Beckwourth wept  
 through the night, the soldiers crept  
 upon their camp, the Cheyenne slept.

In through the dark they descended  
 like a great straw broom  
 to sweep away the dust of blood-  
 red men, and women and children.

Indiscriminate, bullets flew  
 and pierced. Enraged, the Wasichu  
 scalped and disemboweled all  
 left alive. The soldiers made  
 tobacco pouches of squaws' ovaries.  
 Others, belts of their long hair.

Over the hills  
 the wounds of the Cheyenne blossomed  
 coyote yelps in a wind  
 blown from tomorrow.

And a small bird, building  
 a nest in an old tree stump,  
 chirped.

And far away,  
 in a dark closed room,  
 Long Hair turned his head  
 to hear it. But  
 Tashunka Witko, on a bluff  
 deep below a sky  
 weeping, sat  
 motionless,  
 smelt it.

-b-

#### SEA OF BROWN

"Has the white man become a child that he should recklessly  
 kill and not eat? When the Red men slay game, they do so  
 that they may live and not starve!"

—Satanta, Chief of the Kiowas

"The hide-hunters will do more in the next few years to settle  
 the vexed Indian question than the entire regular Army has  
 done in the last 30 years. For the sake of a lasting peace let  
 them kill, skin and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated.  
 Then your prairies can be covered with the speckled cattle  
 and the festive cowboy who follows the hunter as the second  
 forerunner of civilization."

—General Philip Sheridan

(1)

Across the sea of grass  
 swam the tawn Leviathan.  
 Thundering through canyons  
 and fording mighty rivers  
 the sod trembled under its hooves  
 windswept to horizon.

Across  
the continent schooned pale children,  
first in covered canoes, then in iron  
horses, their hooves raping the land,  
the sod drying weakly, the thunder  
tin murmurs.

(2)

Spake the Buffalo:

Resonant with wind, we wept  
no more the red man. The white man crushed  
our skulls and bones from trashyard mountains  
into heaping white soil, fertilizer for wealth,  
as if they felt the earth too deep—  
arise in silent bone tsunami—  
to suckle yesterday's dreams.

(3)

AND IN THOSE YEARS IT CAME TO PASS THAT THE WEST IMAGINAL  
ROSE UP TO SWALLOW THE WEST REAL, AS WITH THE PASSING OF THE  
BUFFALO AND ITS PEOPLE SO TOO FORECAME THE DEATH OF REALITY  
IN A WHOOP,

**"Viva Buffalo Bill!"**

(3)

-a-

DOWN THE LONG CORRIDOR

"No white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon  
or occupy any portion of the territory, or without the consent  
of the Indians to pass through the same."

—Black Hills Treaty of 1868

And so The Great Father proclaimed  
the dark heart of the continent ours  
until the bright rocks we kicked  
as children were found in the center  
of this world now smaller than the dreams  
of the great eagle. So strange  
how the trash of The Great Spirit  
excites Wasichu blood to murder!?

-b-  
GOLD RUSH

"One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk!"

—Tashunka Witko

Death—the children slain.  
 Death—the mountains razed.  
 Death—1873, the Panic spreads.  
 Death—the banks dissolve.  
 Death—1875. Long Hair rides.  
 Death—a dagger through the heart.

The dagger a spade. The spade of metal.  
 Of metal they seek. Promises made. Only one  
 they keep. One lie too many. One truth  
 they spoke:

To take the land; the one they kept.

Tatanka Yotanka, he rides—Life.  
 Tashunka Witko, he dreams—Life.  
 The winds blow the people to the West—Life.  
 Long Hair left to memories rotting—Life.  
 The people are strong—Life.  
 The reservations deplete—Life.

**JOURNAL - 12:08 PM**

*The squaws scream in death.*

*The children cannot.*

*A child has a vision*

*and eats a flower.*

*"Told ya' he'd be our death!"*

*The child blooms.*

*.... and it has come to pass ....*

*"Shut up!"*

*Repelled.*

*"I shall not be defeated!"*

*The wind hides.*

*Rain-In-The-Face.*

*Sitting Bull.*

*"My God! So Many!"*

*Turn.*

*Dearest Sally,*

*Tonight is seven long months since last I held you. I remember. The campaign has been hard, the days have been long, but all the men have faith in the General. All is well. As I write this the clouds remind me of our Timothy; has he spoken yet? Sometimes I get lonely. Sometimes scared. The daguerreotype you sent in March is my comfort. On the plains the winds whistle like you at the Conservatory. Sometimes I ... in a few minutes we shall be leaving on our final campaign. Time is short. I will hold you soon. It's just that these thoughts seemed to bind me, and I just wanted you to know them, and to know that I ..."*

*"No!"*

*"Kill them all!"*

*Whoops parade like fears.*

*The warpath glistens like morning.*

(4)

TATANKA YOTANKA

### **The Legend:**

**FROM A RIVER BORN, YOUNG JUMPING BADGER GREW STRONG, BUT WISE. AS A BOY HE SLEW HIS FIRST BUFFALO. THE BEAST WAS MIGHTY, BUT THE BOY WAS WISE. AS A YOUNG MAN HE HELPED HIS TRIBE, THE HUNKPAPA, TO VICTORY OVER THE CROW. FOUR HORNS WAS THEN HIS NAME UNTIL MEDICINE BECKONED HIM THUS. YET STILL THE WASICHU CALLED HIM SITTING BULL. YEARS LATER, TWO OF HIS OWN PEOPLE FELLED HIM WITH COWARDICE, YET THE MAN WAS WISE. HE ACCEPTED DEATH'S BLOW.**

**The Boy:**

For four days the boy sat  
 eating nothing but his dreams.  
 On the fifth day a badger came  
 to him and asked:  
 "Why do you sit alone?"

The boy replied:  
 "I am not alone. I am  
 always with my self."

The badger turned  
 and headed for his burrow.  
 When the boy thought of his visitor  
 he did so for yet another day.

In the morning the badger returned  
 with an ear of corn and said:  
 "Take this, even a crowd of one  
 must eat!"

The boy said nothing  
 as the badger walked away.  
 That night the boy went home  
 to eat with his tribe.  
 But he never touched that ear.

It was wrong to eat dreams.

\* \* \* \* \*

**JOURNAL - 12:13 PM**

*Wasichu, they fall.*

*"I shall run with the deer, I shall leap with the trout."*

*Guns drop.*

*"Die, you cowards! You deserve it!"*

*"They beg, to me, for life,  
 they beg . . . . FOOLS!"*

*PANIC.*

*"Can't get to the river!"*

*"RETREAT! RETREAT! RETREAT!"*

*before me!"*

*Columns of men,*

*red men,*

*horses all die,*

*they slit*

*even their throats.*

*"He got what he always wanted!"*

*Clamor of hooves.*

*"3000 Sioux warriors?!!!!"*

*—like leaves from the trees they fall*

*upon us.*

*"Take no prisoners!"*

*... that the people shall again live free ...*

*Whoop of arrows.*

*Caress of bullets.*

*The loudness*

*so quiet a heartbeat was all noise.*

(5)  
THE MARCH

The Seventh Cavalry, Saturday, June 24, 1876 A.D.

The heat deafening.

The bare sky reeks.

Exhaustion. Fatigue. The horses moan.

Yet still the Roman Yankee pushes.

Amongst themselves the men quarrel.

The troops corral their hatred.

Custer first, then the Injuns.

"Heard the bastard was last in his class."

"34th of 34!"

"Heard his wife wishes him dead!"

Scratching hard their lice-infested heads.

Ha-ha. Wise woman.

Just one shot. Just one.

From the east  
out of Fort Abraham Lincoln they pushed  
30, 40—even 70 and more miles a day.

No clouds, no shade  
for days. They had visions of death.

Their own.

Custer's.

"He says we're gonna git 'em tomorrow!"

"Heard Terry told 'im to wait till Monday."

"He said, 'Fuck Terry!'"

"Gloryhound. Fucker!"

"He'll be the death of us yet."

"You seen all them photos he has o'himself?"

"Loves that damn horse more'n 'is men."

"Arrogant ass. Crazy Horse 'd've whipped his ass in the Black Hills  
in a fair fight!"

"Fool!"

"Demoted me 'cause I wouldn't go  
on his mid-night raids."

"Demoted me 'cause I wanted to go!"

"Ha-ha! Crazy Fucker!"

"I just wanna be around when he gets his!"

"Shit .... not me."

And Peter Pan pushed

them on to the Neverneverland beyond  
the sky too wide for a child's dreams.

(6)  
TASHUNKA WITKO

"When the race lies crushed and groaning under an alien yoke, how natural is the dream of a redeemer, an author who shall return from exile, or awake from some long sleep, to drive out the usurper and win back for his people what they have lost. The hope becomes a faith and the faith becomes the creed of priests and prophets until the hero is a god and the dream a religion, looking to some great miracle of nature for its culmination and accomplishment."

—James Mornay

-a-

We'll never know his youthful mien,  
nor probe the depths his eyes had seen,  
nor be the one who wished to be  
within a state—uncertainty

recalls the rumors of his youth—  
now tenant of eternity;  
enigma deep in Wounded Knee,  
below the earth, below its truth.

A wild horse, when he was born,  
dashed through the camp, out to the sun  
that he would never dream as torn  
as from his land—the white man won  
the world of only night and day;  
but not the one where shadows play.

-b-

Born in the year of Long Hair,  
the shy young warrior cried  
an endless spring of regrets  
over dreams and shadows and life.

Death, she calls  
from the horn of the buffalo,  
she calls ....

JOURNAL - 12:15 PM

*Chaos.*

*"To the hill, men,  
to the hill!"*

*Retreat .... yes.*

*But honorable.*

*"Damn that Benteen! Where is he?"*



*"The prophecy, the vision. Cut off their ears!"*  
*Mutilation. Naked death. Clothes stripped. Hearing granted.*  
*"Steal nothing*  
*of the Wasichu lest you become of his world!"*

*Long Hair rides up the Hill.*  
*Chief White Bull*

*pursues.*  
*"Dear Elizabeth,*  
*Forgive my neglect! I've not had a chance—*  
*till now—to tell you of my true feelings.*  
*That day in the arboretum when you told*  
*me it was over. I reacted like a child. Forgive*  
*me, as I do you. It's been so long. These*  
*doors we shut we can never open again. I*  
*have loved you always. But the knocking*  
*will not cease. I have loved you, always, now*  
*even from Death.*

*Love,*  
*(?)"*

*"Up the hill! Up the hill!"*  
**THOU SHALT PREPARE A HIGHER GROUND!**  
**TERROR!**

*"Last Hope!"*  
*The happy warrior rides naked*  
*over the hill. 1500 more warriors.*  
*Crazy Horse*  
*descends*  
*like some great ravaging boot's heel upon conspiring bugs.*  
*The white man will call this bravery.*  
*The white man will call this his Last Stand.*

*Scatter.*  
*Panic.*

*"I am tired, Mother, so tired."*  
*Crazy Horse is that miracle.*  
*The ridge is no longer.*

*Death.*  
*Exhaustion*  
*breathes. An earth too deep*  
*to refuse their sins.*  
**DEATH.**

*1000 yards away, in a nondescript bush, an eagle paused,*  
*then screeched.*



(8)  
INTO THE PITCH

-a-  
THIS AMERICAN MALADY

"Guilty! Guilty! My evil self is at that door  
and I have no power to stop it!"

—Dr. Edward Morbius,  
*Forbidden Planet*, 1956

"And I shall have them!

Every last one!

To hell with Bloody Knife and his cowardice!

To hell with boys who refuse to be men!

Victory is mine!

There is blood in the air!

O Libby, thou shalt see me yet again!

Onward **Comanche!**

To the Little Bighorn we ride!

The skies are clear! Destiny is ours!

The wind is dead as Crazy Horse in the morrow!

Cowards will be shot!

I can hear

the future, I can hear

the cheers of crowds

in the East; we shall carve legend from time!

Let us ford tomorrow's early currents

with clarity, with purpose!

The doors of eternity beckon us nigh!

We shall rap upon their frame.

The knocking, the jealousies—

I can hear

them! I can hear

their hatred,

I can

be deaf to such things!

I, I, I ....

Reno,

take your men to the south

and stab at their heart!

Benteen,

to the north and spit on their fear.



(2)

Sunday, June 25, 1876 A.D., 1:22 PM  
a small town in Kansas, at a general store

Behind the store, in a broken piece  
of glass, the young Indian girl  
tries on the lipstick given to her  
by the preacher's wife.

To be a good Christian lady  
is difficult; one must learn manners and culture.

O, she is so lovely now. But  
her mirror is cracked.  
She is like two people.  
On the reservation, her mother  
and the elders forbid such things.

She will hide her lipstick!

(3)

Tuesday, July 25, 1876 A.D., 3 PM  
Somehome, U.S.A.

Dear Mrs. Sally \_\_\_\_\_:

This letter is to inform you of the death of your husband, Private 1st Class \_\_\_\_\_ of the Seventh United States Cavalry, on the 25th of June, this year of our Lord 1876. You will be proud to know that your husband died courageously in the commission of his duties, and in service to his country. His accomplishment was great. His service is appreciated and will not soon be forgotten. Although nothing can compensate you for your loss, may this flag serve as a reminder of your husband's love for his country, and its freedoms; and, likewise of his country's love of men like him.

With deepest regret and best wishes,  
Brigadier General Alfred Terry

AT/cf



watching, watching .  
 Simka watching it,  
 and it honked.

(6)

Monday, June 26, 1876 A.D., 3:15 AM  
 a farm in Yunnan Province, China

Young Tung Hi, alone in his hut,  
 with his mother's week-old corpse,  
 found his swollen belly drawn  
 to her weird scent. His whole  
 5 years hungry. Tung Hi chews  
 off his mother's ear. It was good.  
 Better than the food his neighbors stole.  
 Yes, it was good; as he dreamt  
 of her lips—dry and salty.

In the stream out back  
 a duckling swam by  
 silently.

**JOURNAL - 12:49 PM**

Long Hair lay.

Shot by White Bull.

Through the left temple.

Through the heart.

Silence.

Death.

In the silence

of hours.

"The light is blinding in its softness."

A finger is missing.

His eardrum pierced.

Blood feeds well the ants which consume

him nakedly,

conspiring

a vengeance Long Hair finally hears.

"I am home."

"We are free!"

*Around him history subsumes all  
to rearrange that jigsaw hour.*

"I am DEATH, mother, I am DESTROYED!"

*Death.*

*A mile away only Comanche  
nibbles the blood-soaked sod.*

*Tatanka Yotanka smiles the glow of his vision;*

*a second:*

*from the twisted looks  
of paleface horror at Karma's mighty fist  
Tatanka Yotanka smiles through grimace.*

(9)

### DANCE OF GHOSTS

-a-

Then,  
the people danced  
the dance of ghosts.

Lakota.

And from the shadow-realm  
rose all the warriors  
from Karma's outstretched palm  
closing.

-b-

Now,  
beneath the shadow of a grand casino  
a young warrior, red as the past,  
cries to his mama for dessert  
although she has none  
but the milk  
from poor old Bessie's tit,  
and the young boy,  
scratching his head, full  
of lice, dreaming of Jesse James,  
wails and will not listen,  
pounding his fists in his dirt.



In the light of day  
the dance goes on,  
under the growl of bellies,  
the thunder of yesterherds,  
the deep feet of phantoms,  
but fainter and fainter ....

—*Dan Schneider*

## The Last Stand

The glory of battle is mute.  
Buffalo grass besieges the bleached  
White crosses where the falcon casts  
His shadow on hallowed ground.

Stones at parade rest with names fading  
Like gunsmoke in the wind.  
Red men—White men—dust;  
Death honors no color.

Broken treaties and war paint vows,  
Long knives against the lance.  
Beneath the killing fields of the Big Sky  
All warriors share the final peace.

The ashes of tribal campfires  
Scatter like Pony Soldiers,  
Prairie winds whisper  
Who won—who won?

—C. David Hay



---

C. David Hay has published two books of poetry, *Wings* and *More Wings*, and numerous poems throughout North America and England. He is a fellow of the International College of Dentists and Pierre Fauchard Academy.



### Black Elk Had a Great Sickness

Black Elk had a great sickness

a fever from whence dreams  
came dancing out of the shadow  
world & in this great fever-fire  
were songs hopes & dreams the  
sacred hoop linking all time life  
generations & locked deep w/in  
this fire poured the tears of those  
four generations to come

wandering wandering

a lost barren land  
blown dry by the  
black-wind war.

—Raven

### When Black Elk Went to New York

When Black Elk went to  
New York to be in the  
Wild West Show

he said he couldn't see  
the stars at night but some-  
times he liked looking up  
at the many lights made  
from the power of

---

In addition to writing poetry and fiction, Raven (Echata Cherokee) is a dancer who often incorporates Indian dance into open-mike poetry performances. She is currently a student in the education department at Athens State College in Athens, Alabama.

thunder those beaming  
thunder-lights must have  
seemed the most alive  
thing in his dead world

because most of those  
nights in New York  
Black Elk cried he  
cried for the death of  
his vision & for the death  
of a nation he cried  
because he was home-  
sick for family &  
friends he cried feeling  
sad about the things  
he'd seen in the wasichu  
world—

the slums the starving the  
homeless the beggars on  
the street the high-walled  
prisons where men were treated like  
animals in a cage living always  
at gunpoint—

Black Elk cried for those  
men because in those  
men w/their gray faces  
& dead eyes he saw the  
future of his own people

a people living at gunpoint  
for nothing they'd done that  
was wrong

& so Black Elk cried and  
marveled at the thunder-  
lights and moved thru  
New York most nights  
like a silent shadow from  
another world.

—*Raven*

## Waning Nation

We were born in  
the time of some  
waning moon, I  
think, when things  
all around were  
shrinking getting  
smaller closing in  
& the circle was  
growing tighter  
choking us about  
our own necks &  
in this time  
we ceased to  
breathe our pulse  
weak because we  
had no heartbeat

once the drum  
had stopped.

—*Raven*



## Indian Summer

There are things measured in life by death.

The village girl's slow dying taught me this—  
how false summer renders dim-witted

perceptions of nature's unpredicted ways  
as morning rises

like a thin dark blue pencil stroke  
blending into seamless sky.

After a time dawn slightly thins,  
while the measuring earth gathers

its victory of snow which soon will howl  
through the bared bones of hollow forests.

I watch as the slow dance of summer is harvested,  
knowing I've darker woods to walk than these.

—John E. Smelcer



**Spending the Night on the Klutina River**

*for Carl Sagan (1934 - 1996)*

Tonight I hear wolves howl sadly  
from a dark mountain.

The blue river, gathering shadows,  
flows swiftly through the starry night.

Listening to the windy pines  
I know I am not alone in my sorrow.

—*John E. Smelcer*

### Crucita Romero's Bread

Crucita Romero's wrist bears the burden,  
a thick silver and turquoise watch,  
a violet dress with red blooms at bottom,  
as if they've slid there,  
streaks of color in their wake, a belt of red gauze  
wraps her waist, memento of what once was,  
and green shawl reptilian emerges beneath stone-like arms.

Crucita removes bread from black depths,  
her horno oven; uses a pallet long in handle  
though it's said—she can use her hands.  
Fired up, her second horno awaits.  
Flame tongues lap in hidden silence,  
lick the air but cannot escape their clay home.

Crucita's horno's a twin, two earthen breasts  
two dark air-holes like off-center nipples  
send forth milky smoke.  
On the flat cleavage where both mounds join,  
a pyramid of round loaves grows heavenward.

Silent pueblo,  
mountains, indigo, embrace these;  
robin's egg sky grasps whole earth.

The second horno's tongue calms as it is fed  
pallets of raw dough. Guiding the long handle, look:  
the wide-boned hand of Crucita Romero.

—Lenore Baeli Wang

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Lenore Baeli Wang has published her work in numerous journals and recently completed a collection of poetry, *Born in the Year of the Pink Sink*. She was the 1995 judge for the Wyoming Writers Poetry Competition and teaches writing at Rider University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

### Crucita Romero's Quiz

*I carry my bones on a drum.*

—W.S. Merwin

The river-waves leap like tongues the day i return.  
My reservation, during spring break, looks cleansed.  
I've almost forgotten what ceremony's due,  
the mud floor of our land, surer than asphalt.  
Aunt takes me out in our canoe,  
downriver, where no drinking water's scooped.  
She says, So what have you learned, college woman,  
has your soul sprung leaves, your lake, fish?  
The river-waves lap bark, i cannot speak.  
And who are you, can you say?  
I am her niece, my mother's daughter, this,  
no answer, i know for sure, but know  
tears of years ago will not fall,  
the snow-fed river holds all it can.  
You are this water, who flows beneath us,  
my aunt says, and wisely, you do not speak.

—Lenore Baeli Wang

## The Indian and the Husbandman

Wolf-Killer aches. Middle-of-Winter's stress  
has laid his family low. Not a jot  
of corn in the pit-barn bins, all game shot,  
soft-shell clambeds stripped, the Bay's coldness  
preventing quahog-diving. None remains  
of sere vines leading down to groundnut chains.

Will they live to Catching-of-Fish? Seaborne  
alewives will be thick as paths, blind bears peer  
from caves, pale-green leaves and grass beckon deer,  
birds and eggs come back. At Setting-the-Corn,  
Loving Heart will put up some deer and fowl.  
Best, Weeding-of-Corn, strawberries galore,  
great, sweet, lush, mushed with meal from unknown stores.  
Catching-of-Fish, so far from hungry bowels.

Stark branches, Clotheswearer's house, bulging stall,  
wood piles. He floats out, knocks. Warmth. *"We're in need.  
We'll perish, even if we eat our seed.  
By Ripening-of-Corn, I'll build you walls."*

The Husbandman huffed. *"You come here half-bare,  
woods-killer! Summers also, your fires go.  
Of course you lack fences. What good to throw  
barriers around murdered land? When the fare  
is rich—heavy bushes, fields; thronging flows  
of beasts—you're wasteful. Fool's choice, your panniers  
are half-full in fall, and your squaw concerts  
to hide them! Lazy, on green corn she grows  
the beans! Shiftless rogue, always moving on,  
not a crumb for you, sinful wretch. Begone!"*

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Chris Waters is the winner of two poetry prizes, one for two poems in a BBC contest on the subject of Africa and one in the Community Writers' Association annual international competition. About one hundred of his poems are in or forthcoming in reviews.

Wolf-Killer, on second thought, turns back. "Shiftless?  
In spring we crowd the creeks, in fall the woods? Wasteful?  
Tiring fields? There used to be so much bark to flay.  
Now, you claim all the land and trees. Sinful?  
Not feeding the earth? Your fish stink it up. In the end,  
their oil slays it too! Is it only wrong to move when you own  
more and more? Traveling's easy when you don't own much.  
At our feasts, the winner's who gives away the most! Lazy?  
Loving Heart, for trailing beans up cornstalks? The food's  
together! The weeds are less! The ground's kept wet!

The hours you spend, toting pails, pulling plants! The beans  
even give the cornfields longer life! Lazy?  
Loving Heart, for sticking the seed-stake in just deep enough  
to sadden birds? Your ground, dug so deep, runs off! Lazy?  
Me, having her do the growing, the children the throwing,  
from their perches, at the birds, except God's crows?  
Having them, not me, do all the hauling, from our winter valley,  
to the spring fields, to the summer shores? My fall labor  
gives us meat then and later, the skins to cover us and sleep in,  
In every season, I'm the protector. Fool's choice,  
not to plan? Hunger was easy once. On the ten-day road  
of life, for sure I'd meet a friend or animal. Your people during  
their first winters, cold and hunger snipped them dead like fleas.  
Behind you, your children huddle at your fire. Mine  
slide naked in the snow! Your life is death. Your great belly  
hurts when full, mine when it's empty. My cheeks are  
the color of the rest of me. Our sicknesses are ones you brought.  
Don't you laugh? What's the matter with your brow? What  
drags down the corners of your lips? These times are  
your times. This time, I may die. Beside me, they will bury  
a pot or two. My skin will be smooth. My spirit will rise clean."

**Author's note:** The first four stanzas of "The Indian..." are much indebted to La Fontaine's "La Cigale et la fourmi."

—Chris Waters

## Walls of the Praying Indian Lament

Master, Friend, what cheer! I kneel before you, build  
you your walls, although how now, in fields, in clearings,  
can I plant my corn and burn the brush to bring  
the deer to graze the lush green grass? Your grass, anyway,  
is chasing mine they love away, and you also say  
my ways kill the soil. Many of your laws I don't understand.  
The laws I understand, I fear. Are they for only me?  
A heathen can't own land. I try to pray, but you say  
a baptism doesn't always make a Christian. Then you say,  
if I once owned I've lost all rights for lack of walls  
to hold in animals. I have no cows or sheep or pigs,  
only the dogs for hard times' provender. The deer,  
hardly my own until my stomach knows them, jump  
any walls you'll ever have me raise. And you say,  
if I once owned I've lost all rights for moving—  
with the seasons, or for somewhere else with better land.  
Your walls are laws as well for keeping out, not in.  
Your official viewers pardon beasts when walls are poor.  
Far from your town, your laws let animals go free. What of  
my corn, trampled and munched by cows? What of  
your swine, grunting and milling at waterside until low tide  
to root to death the clam-beds of generations?  
*Thou shalt not kill?* Will your sicknesses despatch me?  
When wolves devour your sheep, why do you shoot my dogs?  
Or shoot them for nothing? Or sometimes shoot at me?  
My sister, your servant, is with child. *Thou shalt not  
commit adultery?* What have you stolen, coveted?  
How have you turned truth right around? Before you,  
truths stayed true. If they turned to lies,  
my lost God ruled I'd said His name in vain,  
my errant soul would never gain the Southwest Palace.  
I loved you, I taught you, I was your first wherewithal.  
In revenge, you gave me your god, your laws, your walls.

—Chris Waters



### Causal Analysis

The West was old and haunted  
by the time we got there,  
filled with empty stone houses  
on cliffs, grandfathers in trees,  
dry wind, forgotten mounds.

We believed there were no ghosts  
since none of us had died  
and discarded the bits of feather  
and bone around each door.

Now something we can't see  
shakes its head and pounds  
the ground at night with  
bare feet and wooden spears.  
And we kill each other,  
believing our anger is the cause.

—Bruce Williams

### Earth Day

Our Father who art  
in heaven,  
what have you done  
to Mother?

—Bruce Williams



### Anthropological Study

Morning comes to everyone's surprise,  
I would tell it a secret, like  
dropping a coin in a blind man's hand.  
On a reservation not far from here  
squeezed between purple mountains  
and a desert of yellow rock  
is a race of tall blue men  
who know nothing of themselves.

They wake each sunrise blank as sky,  
swept by emotions they cannot name.  
As when I was seven some hand  
forced me from our kitchen  
to bang my head against the wall.  
Or when I was twelve Mother  
bent over my bed in a thin negligee  
with her dark nipples underneath.

By noon the blue men have pieced  
together a history from a few notes  
pinned to the wall, television,  
and self-help books—as if Dobie  
Gillis thought positive about Lucy  
in his dreams. All afternoon they  
sell souvenirs they don't recognize  
until night slams down again.

A neighboring tribe, small dark men  
with a genius for ugliness,  
say their blue neighbors came  
long ago through a door in the river  
or the sun. And so loved the sky,  
wooed it so long with drum and prayer,  
that with a roar it loved them back,  
through every cell. It holds them still,  
tight as pain, or hair inside  
a locket when a body's gone.

—Bruce Williams

### Judeo-Christian Tradition:

How many drowned eyes saw the rainbow?

—Bruce Williams

### Perspective

I loved Kit Carson  
when I was a boy  
because he was small  
and brave,

before I knew  
the scent  
of burning fruit,  
heard of Canyon de Chelly—

when the Navajo were  
the rugs  
on Grandfather's floor,  
the silver on his hand.

—Bruce Williams

### Regression

(for David St. John)

The leather jacket is certain it hunted with the tribe, and  
recalls the whip, a sled, salt-cold and wind ... sure it traveled  
dirt roads with Brando and Kerouac ... kept a spoon and  
dropper zippered in a pocket ...

that its chest shows scars from what must have been a fight;  
its back, the marks of nails.

Yet sometimes at night, lying near the boots, it dreams of a  
warm sun, fields of grass, hot breath against its own ... an  
open sky.

—Bruce Williams