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Evicted
(Ohlone)
for Sacheen Sixkiller

She was evicted with her dignity intact.
There wasn't the slightest scent of oils
or pastels in her beachfront apartment.
Nor were there colonnades of easels that
could irk the most conservative of landlords.

It must have been those sand sculptures
she built on the edge of the shore,
with forests of flies swarming on seaweed
strands. And though she preferred
sandy solitude to tourists,
she embraced them
around her roped-off reservation.

Perhaps her landlord resented plastic pails
akin to Jack and Jill. Or maybe her black-
braided, Ohlone hair hanging around
her ankles rankled him once too often.
I think her works were a tribute to her tribe,
washed away by unwanted warriors,
to a symphony of sifted silence.

Capitola-by-the-Sea, California
October 1999

—Mike Catalano

Mike Catalano's poems have appeared previously in the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. His collection, *Silent Thunder*, was published by Coelacanth Press.

Land of the Melting Trees
(Hupa)

Highway 36,
has been reduced
to a goat's path.
Its sideroads are
greased pig slushmonsters,
awaiting the growls
of logging trucks
and the howls
of chainsaws.

Snow-broiled
metropolitan redwoods
embrace
moccasin footsteps.
There is rainfall
inside the trees.
Why are they crying?

Their legacy is gone,
bulldozed by greed,
uprooted like cavities.
Hupa fathers
wept alongside them
before being herded
onto reservations
where their footsteps
melted
into civilization.

Trinity County, California
September 1999

—Mike Catalano

Grandmother Thomas*for Isabelle Wright Thomas*

She came to live with us
shortly before she died.
Her skin tone was brown
as the cotton stockings
whose tops she rolled down
just below her knees.
She had high cheekbones,

angular as the rest
of her tall, gaunt frame.
At least half-Indian,
she cringed when asked
about her bloodline,
whether she was Sioux
or some other tribe.

She'd been taught that they
were savages, half-human,
that she should deny
an ounce of their blood.
Nights, when her light went out,
I'd creep to her room,
lie down, and listen

with my ear to the space
beneath her door.
I'd hear her muffled
chanting, oozing like the coos
of doves, the Great Spirit
washing over me
like mild fever.

—Larry D. Thomas

Migration Theories

i.

And so they were gone again,
were seen leaving;

flocks swept together
from all directions

massing themselves
into huge bird clouds,

then soared.

Aloft, some darted
erratically,

seized
by sudden unseen forces

tugging them indecisively
to and fro,

which way this way
this way that.

Others poured themselves
like molten song
into the sky

flowing smooth & thick,
seamlessly released
from one magnetic field

to be captured by another.

Different flocks
replaced them,
but the following spring

they reappeared.

ii.

How to explain this
absence and presence?

Hibernation, some concluded
like bears they sleep

metabolism slowing,
nearing death;

transmutation,
observed others

like the leaves

instead of two
successive flocks

there is one,

plumage changing
with the seasons;

another view,
closer yet farther

was that they winter
on the moon.

iii.

Odd, when you consider it,
they never said birds were

nomads, wandering
aimlessly
through vast blue skies

flocks with no
fixed location,

meandering from
place to place;

never saw birds
as they did those
who moved below them

whose land they called
wilderness, and took;

as tribes that roamed,
scattered about & drifting

without purpose.

There was, perhaps,
little to gain

from such explanation;

none of them
wanted the sky.

—*Laurie Anne Whitt*

Recovery

*If the Guarani come to an end, who will
pray, so that the world won't come to
an end?*

—Guarani saying

They refuse to leave;

Hitchiti, Apalachee,
Koasati, and Mikasuki

smoldering languages
in smoking villages

that bear witness
& settle over silent

bones, wrapping shrouds
of syllables around them.

They drift into a
different dimension

shifting from speech
into marrow

returning to the black
earth of their origins,

where they sing
of recovery.

*

Words form, and
phrases; then lyrics

on a breath of wind.

Cedars sway, animals
scent the sweetening air

& voices sough, growing
stronger murmuring a
call-and-response

that lifts dark, dampened heads.

*

On the morning after
smoke rises, fires

are tended, children
babble to adults.

—*Laurie Anne Whitt*