



# FROM THE BELLY OF THE SHARK

EDITED BY  
WALTER LOWENFELS

POEMS BY  
CHICANOS, ESKIMOS,  
HAWAIIANS, INDIANS,  
PUERTO RICANS  
WITH RELATED  
POEMS BY  
OTHERS

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Mad

(Cinquain)

2 These be

4 Three silent things:

6 The falling ... the hour

8 Before the dawn ... the mouth of  
one

2 Just dead

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**From  
the Belly  
of  
the Shark**

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We are in the belly of the shark,  
and the question of whether or not  
to gut the shark is academic.  
It is clearly a question of method.

—HERMINO RIOS

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# From the Belly of the Shark

A NEW ANTHOLOGY  
OF NATIVE AMERICANS

Poems by Chicanos, Eskimos, Hawaiians,  
Indians, Puerto Ricans in the U.S.A.,  
with related poems by others

Edited by WALTER LOWENFELS

with introductions by  
DAVID HERNÁNDEZ, CLARENCE MAJOR,  
SIMON ORTIZ, RARIHOKWATS,  
RICARDO SÁNCHEZ, MADELYN SHULMAN



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## *Introduction*

The natives of the American Empire have been living here for some twenty-five thousand years. I presume they will survive another twenty-five thousand.

Long after the white civilization has fulfilled its destiny—whatever that may be—our older brothers will be here. In what form no one can foretell. But you can be certain they will be singing and speaking poems as they have throughout their long history.

What we have in this book therefore is not only a collection of past poems but a foresight into poems to come.

Native Americans carry their past with them. They have what Anglos would call “long memories.” Actually for them all time tends to be in the present.

“Time is really a circle (cycle),” Rarihokwats writes. “In some ways a fire also is symbolic of what this means—for within a fire are the ashes, the past, the flame and heat and light—the present. And there is also the wood yet to be consumed—the future. And yet the wood is something out of the past, and the ashes go back to the soil to be part of the future.

“The native peoples are made from this land, children of the Earth Mother. They are as old as the Rockies, as fresh as a cool spring, as mysterious as a sprouting seed. They walk about this land with the sure footsteps of a man in his own home, knowing they have been here before, belong here now, and will be here still when the cycles have spun a thousand turns.”

We younger brothers whose past in this land is only a few hundred years are separated from the earth. Not only by cement roads and buildings but by our “short memories.” We do not echo any earth or oral tradition. A few facts selected on behalf of the Great White Fathers are drilled into us at school. For us each few years history tends to start afresh. The Fourth of July has become a vacation. Our epics of Black, Red, Brown and labor resistance have to be learned outside the schools. Naturally our poems differ from those of the Earth People. Anglo poems grow out of a three-hundred-year past in this land. Even there, few of us echo our murders of the natives.

The struggle to be part of the earth goes on in many ways. In this book we do find Anglos who relate, just as we will find some in all the struggles that the Native and Black people carry on for their lives.

We are dealing here in these pages not with an art of words separate from other things people do. The poems of the Older Brothers, no matter how young they are, are a natural part of the way they live and communicate with each other and the world.

One young Puerto Rican poet says—if you want to change my poems go ahead, they belong to you. There is no “audience” in the formal sense, no space between the poem, the poet and anyone else, no stage on which there stands A Poet, and far away those who listen. Here the listeners are part of the poem. Darrel Daniel St. Clair, a Tlingit Indian born in Alaska, was in his teens when he wrote:

My school the earth.  
 My teachers,  
 The sky, the clouds, the sun, the moon.  
 The trees, the bushes, the grass,  
 The birds, the bears, the wolves,  
 The rivers, whom I claim to be  
 My mad genius.  
 Once I missed a day  
 Because they tried to make  
 Me learn it from the books  
 In a little room  
 That was really too stuffy.  
 I hope my teachers don't  
 Put me on the absent list.  
 I enjoy going to that school  
 Where the air is fresh.  
 Where nothing is said and I learn  
 From the sounds.  
 From the things I touch,  
 From all that I see.  
 Joy to the world and  
 I've fallen in love with my teachers . . .\*

*nature is a  
superior  
teacher*

\* From his book, *From the Wilderness to Bewilderness*, Magpie Press, Anchorage, 1970.



In our epoch a central problem for everyone is to survive, and we read poets to find out how they did it.

A poem serves to knit the edges of our language together, reveals for an instant, in the vitality of today's common speech, the possibility of becoming our whole selves. It should be talked about in a practical way—Claude Roy, the French critic, said—measuring its weight in happiness and profundity the way one measures the vitamins and calories in food.

"We live inside circles of ourselves." (Emerson) The essential framework around us is always in danger of escaping our grasp because it's in the next degree of vision. It's that degree which the poets in *From the Belly of the Shark* spell out for us.

If the earth could read this spelling it would have no difficulty in recognizing the poems in this book for its own. Not only because many of them relate to sky and air and sea and land; whatever the themes, the poems come from earth people. Perhaps that helps account for the predominantly youthful character of *From the Belly of the Shark*. It reflects the earth's ever-recurring spring which geologists estimate has several billion years ahead of it. The Eskimo poet's "This Is My Land" is typical of voices that will not be silenced on this continent as long as the grass shall grow. That applies not only to the Indians and Eskimos but also to the Chicano and Puerto Rican poets, whether they write of the land or of the barrio.

Consider for a moment the elementary problem of being alive in the United States. On one hand we are, as a people, as a country, infants—less than two hundred years old. On the other hand our civilization seems to be in a supersenile stage.

It's within that framework that *From the Belly of the Shark* offers a verbal relation to emotions that are perpetually young—love among people and the nature from which they arose, and anger at the conquistadores.

Today our best poems are short. We are not in an age that produces Homeric epics. But I suggest that this book as a whole does have an epic character. This is indicated in the title. As far as the white world goes, the one theme that dominates *From the Belly of the Shark* is: We want out!

"Really great poetry is always (like the Homeric or Biblical canticles)," Walt Whitman said, "the result of a national spirit and not the privilege of a polished and select few."

In what way do poems by Native Americans relate to the white poetry world?

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (adopted 1948) states that genocide includes "causing serious bodily or *mental* harm to any group."

The white poetry scene in the United States is in control of a literary syndicate. It is divided up into different families, each of which has its favorite critics and anthologists, all of whom exclude nonwhite poets.

A recent example: *Alone With America: Essays on the Art of Poetry*, by Richard Howard (New York, 1969). It does not mention one nonwhite person. This "comprehensive study" of contemporary American poets has been widely reviewed and praised. Not a single critic mentioned the fact that its 594 pages should have been called *Alone With White America*.

A list of anthologies and books of criticism that exclude or deny the stature of poets of color takes several pages in *Books in Print*. I drew attention to this "white only" policy nineteen years ago in a review of a book which I said should be called *The Oxford Book of White American Verse*.

Aside from my own multiracial anthologies, only one or two anthologies contain a token Black poet, but even that is exceptional. Young Chicano and Indian poets are even more invisible to the white poetry junta. There are several Chicano poetry publishers; also over twenty-five Chicano newspapers and an outstanding magazine, *El Grito*. All publish poets who are completely eliminated by the white poetry rulers.

*The New York Review of Books*, *The Saturday Review*, *The New Republic*, *The Nation* and the other white publications (including most "little magazines") all participate in the White Poetry Syndicate.

What's at stake is not solely a literary affair; it is part of a genocidal attack on people of color. Those who deny the stature of Red, Black and Brown artists are accomplices in the murder of nonwhite people that continues throughout the United States, not only with police guns, but with job rejection, poverty and slums.

Speaking of Third World People, Aimé Césaire has told us: "The people know that all creation, because it is creative, is participation in a combat for liberation . . . But cultural crea-

tion, precisely because it is creation, disturbs. And the first thing it disturbs is the colonial hierarchy because it converts the colonized consumer into a creator . . . For the colonizer all indigenous creation is unaccustomed and therefore, dangerous . . .

“It is the task of the poets, the artists, the writers, the men of culture, by blending in the daily round of sufferings and denials of justice . . . to create those great reserves of faith, those great storehouses of strength from which the people can draw courage in critical moments, to assert themselves and to assault their future.”

What is it that keeps white critics away from the poetry of Black, Brown and Red Americans? A key problem is its national or ethnic quality. Although their poems range through many subjects, their work has a verbal texture that is unique. They draw not only from the world literary traditions to which all poets are indebted, but also from their own oral traditions, their music, songs, special ways of speaking to each other. A young Indian said recently: “We don’t have poets in my tribe, all the people *talk* in poetry.”

My approach isn’t that we should “do something for non-white poets,” rather, we should do something about the standards of poetry that white critics and readers have developed. In the field of poetry most white liberals have shark skins and the proof of racism in their own field rolls off.

The genocidal rejection of poets of color has set up a pseudostandard of what constitutes poetry in the United States. It is part of an approach which also excludes many of the best new white poets whose work is already classic in the poetry underground. White poets from Bukofski and Cabral to Schechter and Wantling, as well as nonwhite poets from Atkins to Sánchez, Saavedra and Welch, are victims of a literary junta whose rule extends throughout the schools and colleges and the white bookshops of the United States.

Black poets are now available in a number of Black anthologies and it is not proposed to duplicate those collections here. *From the Belly of the Shark* is unique in that it brings together for the first time representative poems by descendants of the original inhabitants of our country.

Poems, songs and stories by Indians have been published in English since the days of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793–1864).

One recent Whitman scholar, Maurice Mendelsohn, maintains that Whitman was influenced in developing his unique style by translations of Indian poems which were beginning to appear as he started *Leaves of Grass*. Eskimo poems have also been available since Knud Rasmussen included some in the accounts of his polar expeditions. Chicano poems are a more recent development.

However, the Indian and Eskimo poems that were known were not considered part of the white "poetry tradition," and were available only in specialized books. They were not included in anthologies, textbooks or studies and histories of "American literature."

Our selection is made up mostly of young contemporaries, but some traditional Indian tribal poems are included. This I believe is in keeping with Indian tradition which is basically a vocal tradition where all the past is present now.

Black, Brown and Native Americans are all nationalities within the United States, all part of our multiracial country. They have their own way of speaking, their own music and cultural patterns. The crime of the white literary junta is to deny this cultural validity to over thirty millions living in the United States. In doing so they deprive all white people of the vast emotional resources and insights that Indian, Black and Chicano people express in their poetry.

In the United States whites are in danger of being destroyed as human beings by their inability to recognize the humanity and creativity of other ethnic groups. People of color aren't alone in America. They are part of the five-sixths of the earth that constitute the majority.

WALTER LOWENFELS

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# Indian Poems

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## *Introduction: Some Notes on Indian Poems*

Two young Indian poets discuss their approach to the craft

SIMON J. ORTIZ [Pueblo]

Indian oral poetry is known to have existed as long as the Indians themselves. Some of it has been transcribed into English by various ethnologists, anthropologists and other students of Native American cultures, but written Indian poetry is something new.

The few Anglos who know any Indian poetry at all know the old tribal poetry through translation; they are not aware of recent developments. It is only in the past decade that some of us are beginning to write poems in English—not only Momaday, who is well-known for his Pulitzer Prize novel, but James Welch and others included in *From the Belly of the Shark*.

When I began to think seriously of being a poet, I looked for someone among my people who was writing poems. At that time I could not find anyone at all. Scott Momaday was still at the University of New Mexico as a graduate student; he hadn't had anything published. There was no one. There were some translations of oratory done by Chief Joseph, and autobiographical works done by anthropologists, but they did not represent what I at least felt then was an art form. Of course, some of my views have changed on that.

About poems, it's not important to be analytical toward what you are saying and what you are listening to. What is important is that these words are coming into you and you are using these words. Not for the sake of recollection twenty or thirty years from now, or even to pass on to your children. If you are doing the right thing, it's just naturally going to be part of your children, of your future. It's not really important to note them carefully or definitely for the sake of being preserved to put into some musty old library. That may be why our people made no special effort in the past to record their songs and poems or do translations. They must have taken it for granted that it was better to have a living useful language rather than a written one to be stored away in memory banks.

I didn't think that the tribal poetry in which I had par-

ticipated was poetry until I began to notice the Japanese, Chinese and other Eastern philosophers. I began to read a little on Zen when I was eighteen or nineteen; and then I began to realize that I could also write, could also make notes of the activities around home, some of the songs, and write out of the context of these. I guess what would be ideal would be to really become a priest in the ceremonial fraternities.

There are about two hundred fifty languages spoken by Native Americans. I myself am a Pueblo Indian and my people belong to the Keresan linguistic stock. We don't all speak the same language, although the people are the same throughout the nineteen Pueblo groups. Our language is, of course, entirely spoken. Most of our history was passed down to us through the myths transmitted from one generation to another. I don't understand the language of any other tribe—I can just barely recognize when Navajo is being spoken. If I speak in my own language, I find I don't have to explain so much, because if you know the language, much of the history you would already know. And of course language does depend on this. Whereas English pretends to be a very technical language, Indian tongues don't seem to be as technical—they are more of a spiritual language.

So far as my own poems go, sometimes I quite deliberately put myself in an Indian frame of reference. Then I try to get as near the meaning in English as possible. That is, I think the poem in my own tongue, then redo it in English.

Last night I was in New York, and we were talking about the city, about how you can become stimulated and work creatively in the city. And I was asking myself why? I said that probably a person does creative work because he tries to really identify or maintain himself as an individual within the city. Against the pressures of that city form of life. Whereas in the country he more or less follows the rhythm of the countryside. He doesn't have all these hassles. He knows where he is at. Whereas, in the city, he doesn't, and by his struggles, by the intensification of the pressures and by his response to them, his attempts to maintain himself as an individual—out of this come his creative products.

So far as realizing and maintaining a close relationship



with nature, with Mother Earth, all Indian tribes are pretty much the same in our philosophical foundation, our approaches. The songs are different but the myths I learned I find are similar to those of other tribes.

In our native tongues we say poems to each other in the various ceremonies, the dances, the religious ceremonies, which are pretty much closed to the public. Of course, the poems here are the songs and prayers. There are a few new songs every year—but some of them remain traditional—the recitative poems are the prayers, some of them hundreds of years old.

Something like *From the Belly of the Shark* is very necessary. There is some form of revolution going on today among all American people. Some part of it is taking place among the Chicanos and the Indians—a lot of it is initiated by the Black people. And the Indian people have become very active recently. We must show that we are as valid as any other ethnic or racial group; our feelings must be recorded; our art in any form is very important.

I read *The White Syndicate* and I agree that what has happened was quite deliberate—my people and other ethnic groups have been shunted aside for power purposes. Non-recognition of our people adds to the power and the sense of superiority of the people in control. Even the history of our tribes is denied to our young people when they go to school. My own group, the Ackumo Pueblo, participated in the history of the Southwest, but the Indian students aren't taught anything about Ackumo culture or history.

We have become whitewashed. American history taught in high school and in grade school makes no mention of Indian existence. In many cases they don't even mention some of the treaties. I think this is deliberate—in the sense that the army, representing the United States government, had a policy of extermination against the American Indian. The pilgrims saw our people here as naked savages with no sense of human dignity—as defined in their terms. As an extension of this, white people don't recognize what they took away from the Indians in terms of land and self-respect.

Our poems, like our ceremonial dances and all our cultural activities, do speak for us and they should not be denied.

## GLORIA TRUVIDO [Pomo]

I am the real American, I am a Pomo Indian, I am a human being. Yes, I am the real American and that's why I am a black nigger Indian. I'll never forget the injustices done to me as a child. My injustice was their glory and that is the only glory they will ever know.

They teach in the history books that the Indian was the first American, the only true American. Yes, I am the real American and that's why I am a black nigger Indian on this earth, in school, in the streets, in the show, in life. I am a black nigger Indian and that's why they call my house a shack, my father a wino.

Being a real American black nigger Indian, I was poor; and they laughed because sometimes I had to take pancakes or tortillas and beans for my lunch, they laughed, made sport of, tormented the poor little Indian girl and while they laughed, this black nigger Indian girl learned hate and bitterness, stood in tears and became strong. These things that happened to me are not figments of my imagination, but real, real like I am a human being, real like I am poor, real like I dislike the average white American intensely, real like life. When I was sixteen I entered an average American high school. My childhood tormentors had grown up and were now high school students, only it was worse, because there were more. There were other Indians, but they followed the white students, took their ways, they turned their backs to me, were ashamed of me. Ashamed because I was crude, ashamed because I was original, ashamed because I was a poor Indian, ashamed because I was a disgrace to them. To them and the white students I was nothing and in my eyes they were average, dull human beings. How strange it would feel to be an average white American, so very dull.

It's ugly to be poor and yet it's beautiful, you learn to value food even if it's a pound of cheap hamburger, fried potatoes, a fifteen-cent cupcake, and milk is always a splendor.

I am poor and my people are poor, poor so you people can make yourselves look good. I am a black nigger Indian and I am a dropout and why am I? I am a dropout because of discrimination, because of white punks, because of white girls who think they are top brass class, because I'm nobo-

dy's dog, because I'm nobody's slave, because I don't bow down to anyone, because too many years my education has consisted of hate and bitterness. I am a dropout because of ignorance, a student in the Z class which is the lower achievement class. I am no brain, but neither am I ignorant, school didn't do me any good, it made me look dumb and I knew I wasn't. I have accomplished much for a low IQ student, an ignorant black nigger Indian, and who would have guessed it—certainly not all those bright students in the X and Y classes or the white average American society. One would think a black nigger girl like me would have shacked up with a number of guys and had about two or three kids by now. One would think a black nigger Indian girl like me would have been on the welfare using the poor hard-working taxpayers' money.

Yes, one would think, especially the average American, a black nigger Indian girl would have become a whore, a tramp, a nothing in life, a burden to the taxpayer. This is one Indian that will not be a burden to the so-called great white race, and they do think they are great. Pray to your Lord that I might find forgiveness in my heart for those American Hypocritical Innocences. Go to your churches and pray and speak of brotherhood and come out into the world and make a hell for not only a poor black nigger Indian girl but also a white trash Okie; I am black and she is white, but our hell was the same. The things that I do, the things that I write, the things that I say are not just for a black nigger Indian, but for a white trash Okie girl and she was American, they called her scum, she was a human being and she cried and they were unaware and they didn't care for they were perfect. They went to Sunday School, they had a decent mother and father, they had knowledge, they were white, they were nothing, an empty shell of a human being. They shall live in their little boxes and be average and dull. How beautiful to be poor and eat tortillas and beans, to eat acorn mush and a piece of flank. How beautiful to be poor and be among a bunch of drunks and know their sorrow, their anger, their hate, their bitterness, to know them as people, as human beings and not as scum. How beautiful to be poor and live in the bean field, to pick beans and be among your people, to see the black, brown and white faces in the fields mingled. When these people got mad they shouted their

anger, they were not hypocritical, they told each other their hate and said, you White Trash Okies, damn Wetback Mexicans, drunken feather-head Injuns, black Niggers, they spoke their hostilities and they were freed, they came together and they were the people.

I am a dropout because I wish to accomplish something in life, something of value to my people and other people.

My people are the welfare recipients, the winos who eat in the Mission, the people who toil in the fields, the braceros who people forget are human beings and tend to think of them as automated machines.

My people are the poor and they are poor and they are rich.

My people are the White Trash Okies who are my friends.

My people are the Mexicans who are generous.

My people are the Negroes who took care of me when I was a child.

My people are the Pomo Indians and I am proud.

These are all my people, the only people I know and I am glad I am part of these human beings, they are the people of life.

Like the Pomo basket made from the roots of the earth I am a strong descendant from the Indians and I will keep my heritage as a Pomo Indian.

It is my essence to fight for equal human rights, so that someday my people will live on this earth as human beings and not scum of life.

It is far better to be a black nigger Indian than to be a fool among fools, American Hypocritical Innocences.

ALTA

## Thanksgiving

So many dead Indians on the  
kitchen floor

I can't open the oven to get  
our 10-pound turkey.

The cranberry sauce is thick  
and red.

Maybe next time it won't be  
a brother's blood.

# ROBERT BACON

## Mister Scoutmaster

Aging Fred MacMurray God-and-country . . .  
Where did you learn your woodland lore?  
In the frontiers of East Orange, N.J.  
Or in a box of cereal  
Or from your grandmother  
3/4 Cherokee, of course,  
Who used to ride a horse  
in a Wild East rodeo . . .  
Oh, say can you see what you're doing to mè?

Are you still scouting for Custer, Mister Scoutmaster?  
You of the John Wayne brain  
You with your Cub Scouts follow Akela—  
Grown white men playing cowboys and Indians  
(Without the cowboys).  
So, you've seen the error of your ways, eh?  
You now play only Indian  
While Germans play Jews, I guess.

What will we do for the week's project?  
The Eagle Scouts will dig Indian bones in Illinois.  
While the last generation—  
Kills eagles in Wyoming.

# MARION "TUMBLEWEED" BEACH [Creek]

## A Song to the Chicago Indian Village [Wrigley Field, U.S.A.]

All is hushed at Flanders Field  
All is desolate from the wrath of despair,  
But no poppies wave here  
Nothing lives here  
Save two or three milkweeds sucking life blood  
From a few rotting cross ties, and  
Flies making a green market as they  
Grub up the debris of this Fratricide.

Torn tents, bursted boxes, bursted cans  
Lay strewn with bursted dreams.  
A lonely Brave  
With tear-filled eyes  
With peach-fuzzed chin  
Squats in the last standing tepee  
Between bursted tom-tom and overturned bongo.

Nothing moves here  
Save the greedy green flies  
And the airconditioned cars of the Lighteyes.  
Like vultures of the sky,  
They circle, gawk, wonder and wait  
For the fires of the funeral pyres;  
But the Thunderbird, like the Phoenix,  
Rises from the ashes of burnt mattresses, charred  
springs.  
This is not Knee Bend . . . Kittanning.

*Go tell it on the mountain  
Over the hills and Everywhere  
That the Indian still lives.*

## Indian Children Speak

- People said, "Indian children are hard to teach.  
Don't expect them to talk."  
One day stubby little Boy said,  
"Last night the moon went all the way with me,  
When I went out to walk."
- People said, "Indian children are very silent.  
Their only words are no and yes."  
But, ragged Pansy confided softly,  
"My dress is old, but at night the moon is kind;  
Then I wear a beautiful moon-colored dress."
- People said, "Indian children are dumb.  
They seldom make a reply."  
Clearly I hear Delores answer,  
"Yes, the sunset is so good, I think God is throwing  
A bright shawl around the shoulders of the sky."
- People said, "Indian children have no affection.  
They just don't care for anyone."  
Then I feel Ramon's hand and hear him whisper,  
"A wild animal races in me since my mother sleeps  
under the ground. Will it always run and run?"
- People said, "Indian children are rude.  
They don't seem very bright."  
Then I remember Joe Henry's remark,  
"The tree is hanging down her head because the sun  
is staring at her. White people always stare.  
They do not know it is not polite."
- People said, "Indian children never take you in,  
Outside their thoughts you'll always stand."  
I have forgotten the idle words that People said,  
But treasure the day when iron doors swung wide,  
And I slipped into the heart of Indian Land.



## DUANE BIG EAGLE

### Bidato

[October Pomo Village]

Little Fawn gone to the river for water  
First eyes light  
Smoke hole sun circle  
On the deer skin canvas  
Breakfast haze warmed the rim of the valley.

Coyote came stealthily  
From his camp in the North  
Brown as the grass in the morning sun  
Grey as the wood at the river run.

New Jerkins for Little Fawn  
Drying on a rock  
Apples buried deep in the hayed ground  
Cold morning treat.

Sharing midday acorn mush  
Coyote told of rain filled freshets  
In bear country slopes.  
Four hundred geese flew as he spoke  
Snaking the air above the sullen river.

Drops hissed in the dust on the path  
The ground drank  
And winter rose  
Blue-black from the ocean.

## DOLLY BIRD

### Return to the Home We Made

Hey my man  
you know we can't  
stay in these city trappings  
You know it my man  
so hey  
we been squatting too long  
on land that ain't never  
gonna be ours

There's no jobs  
and the want ads  
offer equal opportunities  
done filled this morning  
Hey we're good  
don't need this crud

From where we're at  
we can see  
a travel agency and  
I don't guess I'm  
for Miami this season  
but oh hey let us  
go Rocky Mountain delving

Remember where we used to live  
when John Wayne never came around  
and Gunsmoke came out  
of your rifle  
let's hock next year  
for this instant  
and when we sell out  
next January

at least we will have spent  
some good times

We have been null and void  
a sight too long  
I'm thinking we could  
go home

And if we don't make it  
we'd a done something

I've seen you remember  
'cause I've seen you cry  
Crying with dry eyes  
and your blood bursting  
at the thought  
of untrod plains,  
the beaver woods  
and I've seen your eyes travel south  
over the memorized outlines  
of sun silhouetted buttes  
down into a wash  
before the August rains  
when we spoke  
a beautiful language  
and the Gods watched us  
We could see them too  
as we huddled in a cave  
of a canyon in a desert storm  
when thunder rolled and  
crashed against red orange  
purple echo walls  
and then a rainbow grew  
where lightning was planted  
Yes I know you cried  
'cause I was crying too

I know you're aching  
to ride the appaloosa  
who knew your destination  
by the mood of your kick  
I did love to see  
you all over leather  
in the distance  
and to feel  
the trembling ground  
as you rode closer  
and nights with  
a separate dusk and evening  
when after fry bread  
and fresh venison  
we leaned our shoulders  
into the rising heat  
of our sacred fire

Oh strong man  
please, we can't go on  
remembering only  
the home we made  
out of what we found  
and a warm quilts sleep  
We must go back  
We're talking sounds  
that we don't understand  
We're down but please  
We could try

They've mock laughed at us  
We awkward tripping from  
the street to where people walk  
the skin-burst clay  
Our confused eyes  
unable to focus

on all them at once moving  
Your years molded muscles  
are outmoded here  
City people putting us down  
as ignorant because  
our knowledge is wisdom  
not a library  
and we ain't needed  
here

Now, it must be now  
our round trip  
Complete the circle  
while we can see  
a flateared cougar  
and can you tell  
how many days passed  
after these tracks of wolves  
and which way is  
the big snow blowing  
and which is the root  
to calm the fever

Now you lift your heart  
with something stirring  
starting to rustle in you  
Asking me if we've  
got enough salt 'n lard  
and is dog sleeping  
outside the door  
and maybe we could  
somehow get  
a few sheep of our own  
or cattle seeing as now  
they're no trouble at all

Museum Exhibition

In the mid-winter of frozen cattle,  
sleeping sheep and hand-mown grain;  
with our words dead and our blood spread,  
we squat in peeling outhouses  
of yesterday's movement.

Watching berry beads crack, deer leather  
go black, and an old shield become  
artifact, we search for exit signs  
to the sun. Down ceramic hallways  
lined with polished fishhooks,  
prayer sticks and our gods' stories  
the morning is a blurry slur.

✓ BESMILR BRIGHAM [Choctaw]

(female writer)

very sensual poem

## North from Tanyana

these are the woman mountains

naked & cold

the without shame cold

the sun has circled around her breasts

and heated her pelvis

source of creation

she sprawls

face up, stomach heaved full and loaded

the legs braced

thighs and knees holding in their long wait, belly

flat

a child's game of statue whirled

in light, another

thrown under the pelvis

an arm from the chest is falling down

the upper arm held above, into

the clean spaces of air

lifts a breast softly

waiting for what giant who will take her

low trees brush up the sides of her legs

spread unprotected

the winds and the great thaws to ravish her

caribou bite at her nipples

wolves rove down from the thick edges of gravity

stand, in the defenseless waste

singular range

shapes on the high moors of silence

chains of silver snow against the throat

the woman—abandon mountains

the frame pierced cold  
 their buttocks and faces are turned sideways as in  
 sleep  
 an avalanche of women  
 hurled from the peaks of winter, they lift toward the  
 long awaited  
 from still valleys, lovers  
 the turf shines like green silk  
 over the young flesh of their shoulders

men riding down on golden horses  
 out of the snow

*Sun rays  
 & makes water for  
 things to grow*

the sun has taken over all the pastures

young moose hide in the willow clumps  
 the sun is grazing on the open hills  
 the thick grass is fresh laid-out in patches  
 moves as light is moved  
 like a slaughter of hides  
 stretched clean for the tanning, as though  
 some certainty of hand had placed them

*Very strong imagery  
 Woman = seed of creation  
 & all the experiences that  
 happen to her*



## Indian Mountain

My father and I  
walk up the mountain  
follow the overgrown  
logging road  
saplings  
maple and fire cherry  
birch, alder,  
willow and beech  
catch at our feet  
we carry  
our deer rifles gently  
knowing we cannot shoot them  
we are climbing the mountain  
white men named Big Pisgah

I stand beside  
the beaver pond  
in the notch between two peaks  
my father gone before me  
his late found love a memory  
Canada geese land  
gabbling in the distance  
they sound  
like a far off pack of hounds  
My feet crush into  
a fallen tree  
its rotten hulk floats  
in the night  
alive with foxfire  
I am climbing the mountain  
white men named Little Pisgah

my hand held before me  
like a lantern

Jacking deer  
with a light back in '34  
my Indian grandfather cruises  
the old mountain road  
in a battered Ford  
fueled with hunger  
his kids ate well that winter  
jays scrapped for the suet  
he hung from the trees  
and you could choose  
which would it be  
starving in the snow's  
grey cloud  
or in sudden thunder  
out of night  
astonished by  
the golden eye of a god

There is a stream which rises  
from a place  
half down the mountain  
my father showed it to me  
as he found it in a dream  
the ghost of an old Indian  
leading him  
a wisp of fog  
to its banks

I shall go to that last water  
when I am old  
when my blood runs  
like the sad Hudson  
heavy and damned

with the waste  
 I shall go there  
 and wade into that water  
 where the bottom is spread  
 with stones  
 that lie like bones of ancient  
 and beautiful animals  
 I shall spread my arms  
 in the sweet water  
 and go like a last wash of snow  
 down to Loon Meadow  
 in the last days of spring.

## GLADYS CARDIFF [Cherokee]

### Dragon Skate

What sound awoke me?  
 The grate of shells?  
 But I am not in the sea.  
 Who is there?  
 Do you know me?  
 One who knew me is dead.  
 The hag that took me from the beach is dead.  
 She took me,  
 Yanked my head back, and  
 My pectorals like broken wings, and  
 The plate of my body, and  
 My whip,  
 All of me distorted  
 In an S for sorcery.  
 I curled to a wizened dragon, brown as a scab,  
 On her drying rack.

Is this daylight foaming, ah flooding, my eye holes

Red, red?  
I'm tight as a gut string.

Before her,  
I moved, easy  
Over the ocean's crust,  
Undulating,  
Mesozoic,  
Swilling on mollusks,  
Loving the sea bottom, myself  
An ovoid kiss.

She  
Kissed the backside of Satan.  
Did her bones jig  
Under the howling strappado,  
Or does she,  
Does she lie flat?  
She buried me alive, the witch,  
Trying to hide herself inside boxes, in dark corners,  
Under the boards of her house,  
In ashes.  
And I, in agony  
While the years gathered like silt in the cave of my  
face,  
Waited,  
Changed in this scorched bandage of a body.

Yet?  
Are you there?  
I arose from black fire.  
I could move again.  
Let me show you.  
Why do you wait?  
Lift me! Lift me!

GREG COLFAX

*from* The River Never Named

He is the riderless horse in the field  
of his mother's soul.

He is the abandoned eye of the never named rider.  
He faces the river

the light from the sky with no moon.  
The woman of all names

visits him in the growing silence of echoes.  
Always at the moon's river

in the desert's dry field, he drinks the voice  
of the never named,

swallows knowledge on his hands and eyes,  
stares at the vision in his palms,

raises his arms to the sky of all moons.

He is called Crazy Words of the Lake's fountain.  
I read in his genesis,

as a warrior's ceremony the diving into the never  
named, embracing the stone

tracing the spirit's feather  
the soul shed's outline.

✓ CARL CONCHA

*mockingbirds, imitation  
mockingbirds - type of  
women?*

## The Spirit Dreams

Don't you know that you're not supposed to make love to mockingbirds?

Damn, how many times do I have to remind you that, if Rainbow Girl smears herself on the wall just one time, you must burn bones, not beans. Because then, the moon will glow at you, and maybe Mr. Skeleton will put on a dance for you in his closet. He'll stomp, rattle his bones, jingle his empty cells to the beat of your heart.

Watch it there, boy! The echoes of his chants might lead you wandering alone down that lonely road and, all of a sudden, spirits will come from all sides at you. They'll paint you in shocking pinks and hard-hitting blues.

Then they'll sew you into a water drum and, while you're floundering around in that half-filled drum, they'll beat the hell out of it.

Then you will see that it's not merely a birthday you're celebrating. By damn, you'll be forever tuned in and vibrating.

*stoned on his birthday  
dreams have something to do with  
spirits sending messages.*

*You're one with your past  
Ancestor worship  
Bones must be placed properly  
otherwise they may not be happy.*

## We Wait

### 1. White Blight

Crookneck Whiteblight, anthropologist,  
Bermuda shorts & tennis shoes,  
spectacles on nose,  
in radiant pomposity rares back  
in his chair, feet on desk.

Of course, the songs themselves have small value for the serious scholar, though I, myself, should probably acknowledge a certain indebtedness to the savage for filling out my biblio. But the real thrill is getting the stuff they think in their childlike simplicity is sacred. The successful anthro. must be not only well-informed but *clever*. And in the *cleverness*—ah, therein lies the thrill. For instance, it's amazing what the waving of a dollar bill can do; spirituality goes up in smoke, so to speak, and you've got yourself an article. I've had not a few successes with the Amerinds.

### 2. The Earth

the earth is my mother  
the grass is her hair  
with your plows you are ripping her breast  
I will not use a plow  
nor will I cut the grass  
nor herd and pen up my little brothers  
the various animals  
I cannot stop you  
but I will not follow you.

3. [to be sung to the tune of  
 "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"]

Is it not wonderful to think  
 What God has done for man?  
 He's sent the white to save the red,  
 To take him by the hand,  
 To take his hand and lift him up  
 From darkness and from Sin,  
 To teach him how to work and pray,  
 Speak English and drink gin,  
 To cut his hair a decent way,  
 Wear pants and shirts and shoes,  
 To eat his food with knife and fork  
 And gracefully to lose.

4. USA

the cities are overcrowded  
 with people who are going crazy  
 streams are polluted  
 a man cannot swim in them  
 nor drink from them  
 neither can he eat with safety  
 the fish that swim in them  
 the air is not fit to breathe  
 there is violence on campus  
 violence in the streets  
 the crime rate soars and  
 a senseless immoral war drags on  
 the government is corrupt  
 and does not even know it  
 and the English language is degenerating  
 on all fronts into Madison Avenue drivel  
 we have maybe 30 yrs. (they say)



## 5. the old prophecy

it came in various forms  
 from the Creek  
 & the Navajo  
 but the message is always clear  
*white men will come*  
 (they did)  
*they will take the land*  
 (they did)  
*they will nearly destroy the People*  
 (they tried)  
*they will waste the land*  
 (they have)  
*then they will go away*  
 (we wait).

## COYOTE 2

## Alcatraz

Departmentalized interior decorations by Hickel  
 Smokey the bearing of ill will promises  
 of maximal Indianness upon the island rock,  
 with the end of trail statues fashioned in metal  
 monstrosities,  
     Alcatraz, whose singing now is tribal youth,  
     whose message to an insane world is courage,  
     whose blood is the ancestor life stream  
     surging and singing the ocean's tidal pull,  
 triplicated tribulations computerized into  
 conformities  
 of our brother's keeper's Bureau of Indian  
 Annihilation,  
 where federal parks administer chain-reaction  
 madness

and paper pelicans nest the brink of treaties,  
     Alcatraz, whose voice is born of dawn,  
     whose dancing is of unity born of pain,  
     whose echoes must resound in many hearts  
     which have felt the iron heel of mad  
         oppression,  
 political pollutions assembly-lined in the Madison  
     Avenue  
 of Nixonian nerve-gassed American atrocities,  
 four score and seven million military massacres ago  
 where pilgrims and pledges cannibalized a continent,  
     Alcatraz, whose children sprang from  
         poverty,  
     whose daily bread was prejudice and hate,  
     whose very life depended upon white welfare,  
     in anger now, a kinship of Indian heredity,  
 Bankamericatharsis in cataclysmic lily-white  
     liberalizations  
 that all men are created equally endowed of genetic  
     genocides  
 that white is right and might is the  
     manic-manifestation  
 of paranoid patriotism excluding all of darker hue,  
     Alcatraz, whose singing now is tribal youth,  
     whose message to an insane world is courage,  
     whose blood is the ancestor life stream  
     surging and singing the ocean's  
     tidal pull . . .

I'm Not Going to Get Burnt Out

I'm not  
going to get burnt out  
with your amphetamines  
even though  
my People's lodges  
were burnt  
by  
U.S. Cavalry  
and  
"well-meaning" citizens

I will not  
be flooded out  
by YOUR  
cheap  
wine  
stale  
beer  
and strong whiskey  
even though  
backwaters  
of dams  
cover our once sacred  
and  
promised grounds

I will not  
be  
pacified  
by blue eyes

*Don't give in to the white life style  
Don't sell out  
Bitterness*

and  
blond hair  
even though  
YOUR  
"heroic" mountain men  
raped  
my  
great-grandmother

## DONALD GOVAN

### Courage

I saw Crazy Horse's  
great vision  
counting coup  
down Franklin Ave.

drunk;

smiling at people  
and  
joking with children.

Down that ugly street  
he staggered.

A death chant under his  
breath  
prepared for resurrection

beside great spirits  
and a brave warrior's  
rage.

# HAIHAI PAWO PAWO

Alcatraz . . . Lives!!

You say they're gone????

All taken off . . .  
all pushed off . . .  
all pulled off . . .  
all ripped off . . .

You say they're gone????

Listen then, listen long—

Hear that laughter . . .  
Hear that cry . . .  
Hear that child . . .  
Hear that prayer . . .

Listen then, listen long.

The winds carry their songs  
The sun carries their warmth,  
The winds carry their songs  
The grass whispers their words.

You say they're gone????

Listen, whiteman . . .  
Listen long . . .

SANDRA JOHNSON [Makah]

## We Sprang from Salt Water

We sprang from salt water

A meeting of waves.

Our men hollowed

canoes

from logs

with the bone of whale

and together rose

as one

but were many

giving thanks to the sea.

With a song

we were born

startling the birds

into flight

while the seagulls

cried

circling the air

and following

the strain of our paddles

moving us

toward land.

Now our men

keep returning to the sea

filled with the rhythm

of salmon

fishing a strange beauty

through dark waters  
 as silver fins  
     leap wildly over death  
 seeking the savage moment  
     that saves  
 the young.  
     Our people will not die.

## MAURICE KENNY

### Monahsetah . . . A Cheyenne Girl (for the Hochs of Denver)

Evicted into the frozen teeth of winter  
 By the landlords of the Plains;  
 Cast into the bloody waters of the Washita  
 Where your father's corpse flowed in the stream . . .  
 His manhood stuffed into his mouth,  
 His scalp made guidon for Custer's soldiers.  
 Torn from the band of the helpless captive women,  
 Your suckling child, mewling and puking in your arms;  
  
 Driven by Long Hair to feel out the ashes of the villages,  
  
 Scout out the vital hearts of your people.

Did Sheridan's red hands fondle the sweetness  
 Of your young Cheyenne nipples;  
 Did Custer mount you like a stud until  
 His civil wife pulled his sweaty thighs  
 From off the Cheyenne mystery of your life!  
 You held your childish hands to your womb  
 And felt the kicking of a bird, the fledgling sperm  
 Planted like so much corn by yellow-locked Long Hair!

Where did you find the love to mount his cot,  
     knifeless,  
 Or did he find your flesh upon his earthen floor!

Custer strutted your grave to glory, foolish girl!  
 Now in the winds of the Washita Valley cottonwoods  
     cry

For the slain Cheyenne. No wind moans in the leaves  
 For the head-strong girl, daughter of Little Rock,  
 Who followed the tails of the pony soldiers.

## CHIRON KHANSHENDEL

### Grandfather Pipestone Soul

Grandfather pipestone soul  
 upon empty gambles,  
 upon rock-faced ones their eyes  
 just steel, boiled  
 noble savage. . . . hah hah  
 hah          Grandfather forgive them  
 you just weren't human  
 to their eyes, just a dirty  
 redskin in a golden city  
 really just adobe.  
 Grandfather your songs  
 like rain not gentle  
 necessary, hard sometimes  
 life—necessary.  
 Grandfather your dances  
 shut-eyed, stopped over, inward-bound  
 slowed but not stopped  
 just because your body died.  
 Grandfather I love you.  
 You didn't know me—unborn—



the embryo pipestone soul  
 (my chicken's-feet must have danced  
 my lips chanted  
 within mother then)  
 I hope you heard.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'VE DONE?  
 What they have done to your family.  
 The ancestors would not like my name—  
 it's christians that gave it to me.  
 We're in California now.  
 Grandfather, they even moved us.  
 Some stayed that had the knowledge, but my kiva is  
 closed,  
 my skin paled by eternal wet winter and  
 so—even my name is gone.  
 Grandfather I have never seen you  
 but someone inside-me knows your face.  
 Inside me you still dance,  
 inside me you still sing—  
 my heart is your drum, your grand-daughter's body  
 your rattle. I hope when this body dies  
 someone remembers to make a paho for me  
 though I have no name and silence condemns me.  
 How many kivas are dead now, Grandfather,  
 and how many Grandfathers receive prayers where you  
 are?

I send this to you while home is a museum  
 and our loved ones zoo specimens—and KNOW  
 that I love you and hear you still!

December 4, 1970  
 Kensington, California

## PETER LA FARGE

Autumn 1964

Sitting here in the night with  
darkness heaped in every corner,  
wondering if you can read my writing,  
because that's the only light I have.  
The morning's coming. I can hear the  
garbage trucks singing like city  
crickets, collecting the night.  
Thinking that of the new songwriters,  
I'm the oldest and the most evil with  
my past. I have no lies to tell  
about my past and sometimes it  
strangles me like a black dog putting  
his foot down my throat. I am not so  
wild as I was once; I'm pretty good  
about it. I haven't gotten the rabies  
of shadow in my teeth except once or  
twice in the last six months. I  
always rage most at those I love,  
and mostly for good reasons. And to  
those to whom I did, my apologies.  
But you may have deserved it.

Someone once said to me "I envy  
you your heart, but I couldn't stand  
your hangovers." And oh, how I have  
fallen for you, you high-stepping,  
wrap-around chrome-popsicle girls.  
For the right pair of legs, and God save us from  
the probable barbed wire of blonde hair. And  
I'll do it well, and if there are few men that

do that any more they get oriented to be sane too soon. And it's because I am mad and can't help it.

I always love like a high jack-rabbit going through a bramble. Or a hawk up there twining the world around him just before he falls to get the jack, like an eight-wheeler going through a Kansas town at midnight, with only a little boy watching from his bedroom window and riding every non-stop car out. I love like an act of nature.

Not casual, my love.

But like a tender trumpet.

Softly.

Proudly.

Loudly.

Lostly.

In the thunderheads my dark,

My love.

Not casual . . .

## ✓ JUNE LEIVAS

### No Indians Here

so you've gone sightseeing  
 on the reservation  
 your precious camera  
 hangs from your neck  
 and the angry noon day sun  
 releases the sweat  
 from the forehead you've mopped  
 a million times  
 with your monogrammed handkerchief  
 in stuffy executive meetings

you thought you'd get away from it all  
and see the indians  
living the easy life  
but you're faced by those  
unwilling to pose  
in their hunger  
hopelessness  
and grief  
these are the weary and the numb  
the helpless and the dumb—  
there ain't no indians there  
they're just distrusting souls  
who turn their backs  
on the exploitation  
of the camera's click  
so take your camera back  
to your executive meeting room  
and snap a picture  
of their destiny  
in the making

you walk into the tribal council chambers  
and stand on the plush carpets  
surrounded by the reservation leaders  
dressed in suits and wearing ties  
so eager to tell you of the projects  
that will help reduce  
reservation unemployment  
they show you the plans of the plants  
that will bring the reservation up  
to the standards you've set  
the smoke-producing progress  
that we fear in the cities  
will take their toll in time  
and all in the name of progress—  
there ain't no indians there

they're just puppets  
dangling on the dreams  
of success and progress  
you've tied them to

the indian culture center  
on the college campus  
guides you to the source and topic  
of your term paper  
and brings you to the indian student  
who knows first hand  
what it's all about  
long-haired behind the desk  
wearing beads and moccasins  
talking of the good life that was  
before you came  
and how he plans to return to it  
he is the traditionalist  
before alcatraz posters  
and indian leaders  
geronimo's eyes  
tell you no lies  
and you think that this  
is truly what you've been looking for—  
that ain't no indian sitting there  
he's just a dreamer  
determined in his pursuit  
of something to believe in  
believing that yesterday  
will return for him

you come into my house  
where angela davis on the wall  
stares back at you  
and the posters cry out  
revolutionary slogans

that hit harder than my words  
and viva la raza tells you  
that my blood is mixed  
i'm sitting cross-legged  
on the floor  
with a book of malcolm x  
open in my hands  
your indianism tells you  
there ain't no indian in this house  
where there ain't no indian posters  
and i'm seeing you through  
little square glasses  
and my eyes reflect your thoughts  
there ain't no indians here  
there is only me  
but if you'd leave your alienation  
nationalism  
and racism  
behind  
i'll lead you by the hand  
to the hills  
the unmarked graveyards of time  
beyond the pages of a history book  
outside the glass cases of the past  
and after you've seen it all  
try if you can  
to look into my eyes  
and tell me that  
there ain't no indians here . . .

A. LOPEZ [Papego]

Direction

I was directed by my grandfather.

To the East;

So that I might have the courage  
of the bear.

To the South;

So that I might have the wisdom  
of the owl.

To the North;

So that I might have the craftiness  
of the fox.

To the earth;

So that I might receive her fruit.

To the sky;

So that I might live a life  
of innocence.

N. SCOTT MOMADAY [Kiowa]

Earth and I Gave You Turquoise

Earth and I gave you turquoise  
when you walked singing  
We lived laughing in my house  
and told old stories  
You grew ill when the owl cried  
We will meet on Black Mountain

I will bring corn for planting  
and we will make fire  
Children will come to your breast  
You will heal my heart  
I speak your name many times  
The wild cane remembers you

My young brother's house is filled  
I go there to sing  
We have not spoken of you  
I will follow her white way

Tonight they dance near Chinle  
by the seven elms  
There your loom whispered beauty  
They will eat mutton  
and drink coffee till morning  
You and I will not be there

I saw a crow by Red Rock  
standing on one leg  
It was the black of your hair  
The years are heavy  
I will ride the swiftest horse  
You will hear the drumming hooves



# DUANE NIATUM [Klallam]

## Ascending Red Cedar Moon

(for Philip and Ann McCracken)

### I

Out of friendship and a slow retreat of the blood,  
I step like coyote through petroglyphs  
of spear, trap, and drum.

Streaming ocher threads over the salmon ceremony,  
the rain falls in four directions.

Wind's chant walks like Grandfather around  
the village, greeting the moss, shells,  
berry and water baskets.

Children circle the Elders in half the moon  
who are carving their lives on this totemic dream.

My son has run off somewhere,  
perhaps to discover the thundering hawk,  
the dark beauty of deer turning  
to face him, vanish like sunlight down the path.  
Or maybe he is learning how to fall,  
make room for pain and the nightmare in his heart,  
rest like a bear in the dark?

Like Niatum, his great-grandfather,  
he believes the humor of bluejay,  
the legends in a dive of the whale,  
will lead him to fern-shadowed meadows,  
the Elwha river's thousand-year elegy to Spring.  
With the gift of the blind,  
he may turn these roots into song or to dance.

My sweet woman, keeper of the poem,  
floats like a waterbug,

a naked fan of sunlight.  
 I will lie with her soon in the soft,  
 secret room of willows.

## 2

In the owl's light, we darken with the fire  
 and the moon spreading its feathers  
 over the Ho-Had-Hun sky.  
 Now dancing in honor of the missing fathers,  
 the drums grow quiet as the river birds,  
 and we see the statlth step  
 from the memaloose illahees, the forest.  
 The Elders rise first in greeting;  
 it has been so long since the Klallams  
 have heard such weeping:

“Chee chako. An-na-du! An-na-du!  
 Mox-pooh. Mox-pooh.”

---

*statlth*: ghosts

*memaloose illahees*: graves

*Chee chako*: newcomers

*An-na-du!*: come!

*Mox-pooh*: lie still and then  
 explode

✓ BETTY OLIVER

The People Call for Justice

The People call for justice  
White brother, do you hear?  
Do the ghosts of the past  
Walk at your side,  
And does the bitterness of today  
Close your heart to truth?  
Kinzua  
Drowning the history of the Seneca.  
The mountain of the Pipestone  
Now a place for unseeing tourists to gawk.  
Where are the wampums of the Iroquois?  
Locked in sterile glass  
For sterile minds to view  
While the home of the Delawares  
Waits to disappear under the waters of Tocks  
Where will our kindness stop? - all things taken  
When the last quiet man  
Walks into Eternity?

*Justice being locked into sterile glass.*

*What is Indian is not <sup>only</sup> what is viewed in the museum.*

# ONE STAR

## Poem

The native walks  
The rural past  
The urban paths  
And the roads between  
To test the dangerous drives  
That play and pulse  
Like roller coaster drops  
And titawhirl spins  
Careening around the zip-zoom moods  
On former farm and country lanes  
Recording and mapping.  
Hoping  
For a 4-leaf cloverleaf intercession  
Hurtling him  
Straight  
Where  
Someday  
He may grasp control  
At the steering wheel  
And softly twist  
A precise mixture of emotions  
For the tender fuel system  
of his soul

## SIMON J. ORTIZ [Acoma Pueblo]

### War Poem

[Oct. 15, Moratorium Day]

Santo Domingo, DemRep, March 1965.

I took part, attached  
to the 82nd Airborne,  
in the U.S. action to "save  
the world for democracy."

We landed 35,000 troops  
and turned part of Santo Domingo  
into rubble and whores.

Acomita, Spring of 1966,  
near my home, a couple nights before  
the El Paso Natural Gas Co. line blew up.  
The flames towered hundreds of feet upward.  
Eulogio Garcia was saying, "I cried.  
I got scared. It all came back to me.  
I went in my bed when I heard it.  
I was there. They told me  
I was doing something for my people.  
I am telling my children  
that it is no good, that it does something  
to a man's dignity."  
Mr. Garcia, a WW I veteran.

George, a Mexican kid,  
wrote me from Vietnam, 1967:  
"You know, I feel bad,  
this morning I dragged  
a boy, V.C., I guess, from a hole.  
He was hiding, & he was crying.

The sargent some punk kid  
 from Texas kicked him.  
 I was crying. He looking  
 like my little brother.  
 I'm part Indian myself, you know."

Yazzie, young Navajo Vietnam veteran  
 in Manhattan Bar, 1968, in Gallup.  
 "I don't know. I don't know."  
 We watched Nixon on T.V. declare  
 antiballistics in Montana.  
 Yazzie's hair still matted with blood.  
 Got clobbered by the cops.  
 Just got out of jail. "I don't know."  
 Shaking his head,  
 crying onto his Purple Heart.

Acomita, 1968, just off U.S. 66  
 in the village cemetery.  
 "He looked so goddam small,  
 maybe they cut something out of him,  
 cut him short," said Johnny Poncho  
 about Jerry Chino's military burial.

Rough Rock, 1969. This morning  
 I looked out at the flag.  
 Red and white and blue,  
 foreign matter whipping in the wind.  
 The sky is beautiful beyond it.  
 I think of mountains.  
 I think of the people.  
 I think of the harmony possible.

## Grandpa

Grandpa he was a man  
he taught me the things that  
    mattered  
how to eat oxtail soup before  
fishing on Saturday morning to  
keep you warm how to  
cast a line into a  
streamful of angered anglers and  
be the only one to  
come home with anything worth  
bragging about how to  
set teeth in any saw and  
dovetail a joint in a  
chair leg and roof a  
house and weld a  
straight seam on a  
kitchen pipe and make a  
home out of a  
workshop out of a  
two-car garage and  
smoke Granger's tobacco and  
love work and kids and  
fishing for "a Man's  
life is his work and  
his work is his life" and  
once you take away his work  
you pull the plug of his life  
and it takes too long  
for it to drain silently away.  
One day they came and

told him to go home and  
rest old man it's time  
that you retire he begged  
them "let me stay" but  
they of course knew best for  
everyone knows at sixty-five  
all men are old and useless and  
must be cast off to  
rot so he came home and  
tried to fish and  
couldn't and tried to joke and  
couldn't and tried to live and  
couldn't. Every morning he was  
up at four and cooked breakfast  
for  
grandma and warmed up the house  
and  
went to the workshop and  
filed saws for neighbors but  
they told him to stop that too  
so he put all his tools away and  
cleaned up the workshop and  
came into the house for his  
daily afternoon nap and  
died. They didn't know  
what I knew because he  
didn't tell them but  
he showed them  
Grandpa he was a man.



✓ FRED RED CLOUD

White Man Says to Me

save.

I save. String. Bricks. Trees.  
Horses. Leather. Nobody wants  
what I save. So I go into the  
desert, rolling my ball of string  
which is four feet in diameter.  
Two white men come. They look at  
the Bricks. Trees. Horses.  
Leather. String. Where'd you  
steal them things they ask.  
they don't listen. they take  
the string from me and they  
twist it into rope. Now they  
put the rope around my neck.  
They hang me from one of the  
trees I saved.

*Exploitation*

*White man does it again  
No matter what he does he can  
not win.*

NORMAN H. RUSSELL [Cherokee]

anna wauneka comes to my hogan

anna wauneka comes to my hogan

she tells me

mother must go back to the hospital

who has the whiteman's disease

i say to anna we must ask my mother

my mother says no

I say to anna then she will not go

anna says that then she will die

then I tell anna wauneka that i think

my mother will die anyway

in the white man's hospital

that it is better for her to die here

than in that other house of the dead

when my mother dies

we will close the hogan

we will build another hogan

we will sing a song to my mother

this will not be for a long time yet

until that time comes

I will dress my old mother each morning

I will carry her into the new sunshine

so that she will see the dawn come

so that she will hear the bird sing.

## DARREL DANIEL ST. CLAIR [Tlingit]

### Only in Silence

O Alaskan Rain

When you begin to pour,  
Remember these thoughts  
Before you touch the earth,  
That after you come,  
Soak in to the minds of men  
Yesterday's lost bits of love.

O Alaskan Wind

You are blowing very hard.  
Pause a moment  
Before you move on,  
And after you are gone,  
Take with you, Mother Purity,  
And introduce her  
to Man's inner soul.

O Alaskan Moon,

You have done your job well,  
You are the night light  
That creates night time beauty  
And before you go down  
Just remember,  
that I, like others,  
Am looking forward  
To seeing you again.

O Great Alaskan Northern Lights,

You being the mystery of mysteries,  
I tell you now,  
To remain as such,  
For already,

Man  
is getting to know too much  
For his own damned good.

O Alaskan Snow,  
You come to my earth  
By the millions  
And you feel rather cold,  
But let it be known  
To the millions of my kind  
That at least  
You came in peace,  
And left  
in peace.

O Alaskan Sun,  
You have shown me  
What is warmth and light,  
You have shown me  
Your beauty which reflects  
Off  
The clouds, mountain tops and water,  
And today,  
Before you go down  
To shine in another town  
Remember to remind  
The bodies of men,  
That you  
Are still the  
Vitalness  
To all growth.

O Alaskan stars,  
You are the number  
Of many unknown suns  
Seen by us

Only at night,  
 You in the sky  
 Have created the "Big Dipper"  
 And gave the Alaskan man his pride  
 Which now stands proudly  
 As a design on the Alaskan flag.

O Great Alaskan Natives,  
 You have understood  
 These forces in silence  
 And have lived accordingly,  
 I know  
 It is hard to understand  
 What is happening today,  
 So this is my prayer  
 For all of us,  
 Amen.

## ✓ NIKI PAULZINE

### Untitled

i am the fire of time. *eternal*  
 the endless pillar  
 that has withstood death.  
 the support of an invincible nation.  
 i am the stars that have guided *eternal*  
lost men.  
 i am the mother of ten thousand  
dying children.  
 i am the fire of time.  
 i am an indian woman!

*smalli - humble*

## BUFFY SAINTE-MARIE

### *from My Country, 'Tis Of Thy People You're Dying*

Hear how the bargain was made for  
the west

With her shivering children, in  
zero degrees

"Blankets for your land" so the  
treaties attest;

Now blankets for land is a bar-  
gain indeed—

But the blankets were those

Uncle Sam had collected

From small pus-diseased dying  
soldiers that day,

And the tribes were wiped out  
and the history books  
censored!

100 years of your statesmen have  
felt it's better this way;

Yet a few of the conquered have  
somehow survived

Their blood runs the redder  
though genes have been paled;

From the Grand Canyon's caverns  
to Craven's sad hills

The wounded, the losers, the  
robbed sing their tale;

From Los Angeles County to up-  
state New York

The white nation fattens while  
others grow lean.

Oh, the tricked and evicted,  
they know what I mean:  
My country, 'tis of thy people  
you're dying!

## SANDY SANDOVAL

### Tight Mouth

Indian with tight mouth  
hard to understand except  
if you live in Tohatchi  
the wind dries and robs

water with every  
word spoken precious sounds  
filling the land lips  
cracked as the river bed.

## BOOTS SIREECH [Ute]

### My Son

Go, my son, and dance

Go and learn

Go and show those who laugh at you.

Go and dance among the beating sound of the war  
drums

Go and dance among the chanting voices,  
those that chant by day and by night.

Yes, my son has danced

My son went and danced among the chanting voices  
and among the beating of the war drums.

And now there is no one to laugh at my son.

There is no one left to tell how my son danced.

Where are they?

Where did they go?

Here we stand, facing the wind.

Here we stand, listening to the wind as it carries  
away

the sounds of the war drums.

Here shall the wind blow;

Here my son and I stand alone.

Soon only the wind will know my son.



# RICHARD SMITH

## Till Forever and More

i thought you and i would be friends  
forever  
until the sun died  
until the grass would grow no more

i let you go your way  
that was not enough

*Indians wanted to be  
trusting, freedom, &  
friends*

i trusted you  
before my heart was bleeding  
before my guts were torn  
before my thoughts scattered  
before the lands stolen  
the women and children dead  
the Circle of Life  
almost broken.

*still a breath of life*

Hear me, america  
still i live

the memory of your lies  
fills my heart  
memories of The People's blood  
on your hands and lips  
the memory of your darkest  
white thoughts

*lips: drinking blood,  
giving*

*white & still ugly; dirty*

Hear me america  
you can never be forgiven

*Circle unbroken poem. Last line  
+ title makes the circle.*

*America will never erase the shame  
of genocide*

Hear me america  
you will never be forgiven

Hear me america

Never.

✓ VICKIE VIGIL

Native Tongue - you

you with the funny sound to someone's ear  
you that i understand  
it's a welcome to hear you  
you who is hardly known  
even among your own people.  
you who teaches me truth  
coming from the heart. - from blood  
the echo of our forefathers & emotions  
you bring to us.  
you speak from within.  
my friend, native tongue,  
i will not forget.

When the native tongue dies, so will  
the culture  
Doesn't question the truth of the tongue

## My Kind of School

Deep in the forest  
Where a cool breeze  
Fans my face,  
Where the warm sun  
Shines in bright  
Geometry problems  
Through the leaves  
While birds lecture and scold  
And squirrels play at recess  
Through the trees—  
This is my kind of school.

Or give me  
A great rock ledge  
Overlooking a valley.  
Below me, let me study  
People as they rush about  
As if today stands alone—  
Their only time  
For running past  
Their neighbors.  
And still I sit  
In quietness,  
Learning from them  
That to run  
Is to run,  
Is to run . . .

✓TEKAHIONWAKE [Mohawk]

The Cattle Thief

You have stolen my father's  
spirit, but his body I only claim.

You have killed him, but you  
shall not dare to touch him  
now he's dead.

You have cursed, and called  
him a Cattle Thief, though  
you robbed him first of bread.

Robbed him and robbed my  
people—look there, at that  
shrunken face,  
Starved with a hollow hunger,  
we owe to you and your  
race.

What have you left to us of  
land, what have you left of  
game,

What have you brought but  
evil, and curses since you  
came?

How have you paid us for  
our game? How paid us for  
our land?

By a book, to save our souls  
BIBLE

*parallels w/ European tales  
Jack & the Beanstalk  
3 Bears & Goldilocks*

from the sins you brought  
in your other hand.

Go back with your new relig-  
ion, we never have understood,

Your robbing an Indian's  
body, and mocking his soul with food.

Go back with your new re-  
ligion, and find if you  
can,

The honest man you have ever  
made from out a starving man.

You say your cattle are not  
ours, your meat is not our  
meat;

When you pay for the land  
you live in, we'll pay for  
the meat we eat.

Give back our land and our  
country, give back our  
herds of game;

Give back the furs and the  
forests that were ours be-  
fore you came;

*Exploits; take advantage; punish*

Give back the peace and plenty.  
Then come with your  
new belief,

And blame, if you dare, the  
hunger that drove him to  
be a thief.

✓ EUGENE TSO

I Am Hungry

I was hungry and you  
landed on the moon.

I was hungry and you  
told me to wait. *Do wait in line*

I was hungry and you  
set up a commission. *for investigation*

I was hungry and you  
told me I shouldn't be.

I was hungry and you  
had missile bills to pay. *First things come first*

I was hungry and you said  
"Machines do that kind of work now."  
*Do that work for me?*

I was hungry and you said  
"The poor are always with us."  
*& will be till they starve to death*

I was hungry and you said

"Law and order come first." *Whose law & order*

I was hungry and you said

"Blame it on the Communists." *Blame it on the  
government*

I was hungry and you said

"So were my ancestors."

I was hungry and you said

"We don't hire after 35." *35?*

I was hungry and you said

"God helps those. . . ." *Who helps themselves*

I was hungry and you said

"Sorry, come back tomorrow."

*I've heard that song before*

## TURTLE'S SON

### Pyramid Lake 1970

A curved bow, white dots of fire crystals are the  
pelicans,  
skimming the surface of Pyramid Lake, following,  
it almost seems, their shadowed bow before them,  
as they fish and have fished since Coyote first  
fashioned  
this sacred lake.

(A broken line of hip-booted fishermen in grim  
determination,  
casting shoulder to shoulder for the trout born of  
hatcheries,  
returning yearly to this spot where they were  
dumped,  
seeking their mother warden with metal star,  
perhaps,  
intruders to this lake.)

The old man whose fingers fashion drums and  
arrows,  
who is and was forever the Paiute guardian of  
these waters,  
sings lonely as he walks the dunes which are his  
earth,  
sings lonely as he tans the buckskin for his  
grandson,  
who must dance eagles.

Indians of All Tribes who have come upon a raven's  
wing,  
white buffalo and deerskin people, totem pole,  
katchina and



sand painters, hunters of the Everglades and  
 plains and forests,  
 united under the Spirit sky to support their brother  
     Paiutes  
         this sacred lake to replenish.

The old man whose fingers fashion drums and  
     arrows,  
 who is and was forever the Paiute guardian of  
     these waters,  
 sings softly, ever softly of an All Tribes people,  
     softly,  
 sings a unity, to the sky, to earth, to sacred lake,  
     sings softly, forever, forever.

## GERALD ROBERT VIZENOR [Chippewa]

### Haiku

    With the moon  
 My young father comes to mind  
     Walking the clouds.

    Under the full moon  
 My shadow moves like a stranger  
     First Autumn frost.

    Horse in the frost  
 Like an engine puffing the slopes  
     Missing a breath.

    Early snow  
 Old woman on a park bench  
     Smell of moth balls.

Drifting snow  
 Curls like the lips of a dog  
 Meeting a stranger.

Every day at the lake  
 Our footprints are washed away  
 Remembering a friend.

## JAMES WELCH [Blackfeet]

### Getting Things Straight

Is the sun the same drab gold?  
 The hawk—is he still rising, circling,  
 falling above the field? And the rolling day,  
 it will never stop? It means nothing?  
 Will it end the way history ended when  
 the last giant climbed Heart Butte, had his vision  
 came back to town and drank himself  
 sick? The hawk has spotted a mouse.  
 Wheeling, falling, stumbling to a stop;  
 he watches the snake ribbon quickly  
 under a rock. What does it mean?  
 He flashes his wings to the sun, bobs  
 twice and lifts, screaming  
 off the ground. Does it mean this to him:  
 the mouse, a snake, the dozen angry days  
 still rolling since his last good feed?  
 Who offers him a friendly meal?  
 Am I strangling in his grip?  
 Is he my vision?

# ✓ TOM WHITECLOUD

## Thief

We knew of war  
For we were warriors  
The winner takes all.

We knew of lies  
For we were diplomats  
in a small way.

We knew of politics,  
for we were democrats:  
a man was a man.

You took the land  
We tried to understand;  
You live on it, not with it.

But, my friends,  
(And you were often good friends  
As you understand friendship):

Why did you steal the smiles  
From our children?

*Why hurt innocent*

## RAY YOUNG BEAR [Mesquaki]

### Through Lifetime

white buffalo sleeping through snow and mixes  
me into animal bones avoiding to be struck by  
daylight.

red colored evenings accepted the meat  
thrown as offering over this man's old sky shoulders.  
it seem that while he skinned his kill  
songs formed from hard life of earthmaker  
and he sat with knife eager for his wind  
to carry body scent other directions.

there are in a house of many years  
my shoulders held by fingers of the sun.  
a mourning woman who sat in the middle  
with rainwater eyes came as mother and wrapped  
a red blanket over my ways and edges.

she combed my hair with wings of the seeking owl.  
she sang of spring birds and how brown running  
waters  
would be a signal to begin family deaths by  
witchcraft,  
she showed me a handful of ribs shining a land day

i leaned too close to the sun and felt the warmth of  
peyote  
pumping my blood.  
i washed my face with thunder songs that touched  
low  
and earth attached a vision to his long followers.  
i listened to my sad hunting dogs tremble magically

of two crows chasing spirits away from  
fasting-ones.

i thought of an intended life and autumn came shyly  
bearing songs but no gentle children.

woman of the horses sat in my circles.  
she created fire burning only when bears cleaned the  
skin

of people from their teeth beside dreaming rivers.  
the northern lights carried the meaning of life  
far past the sufferings of night enemies.

old men inside rainbows offered no messages but  
whispered  
of another existence closer to a prayer than tears

my raining-grandfathers walked speaking in choices  
over the black skies.

i stood inside them and released my hand  
which held my words gathered into parts of the  
earth.



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# Chicano Poems

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## Introduction

RICARDO SÁNCHEZ

In poetry, as in his social life, the Chicano is exploring the core issues of what it means to survive while others thrive. The Chicano experience is as varied as those who live it; therefore, Chicano poetry is varied in perspective. But most Chicano poets do write in and around the central themes of hunger, poverty, identity crises, social abnegation, hope, *carnalismo* (a love/brotherhood), justice, *Chicanismo*, *machismo*, Aztlán and other social phenomena—all encompassed by the barrio experience. It is in the barrio language and in the life style of its inhabitants that the poetry of the Chicano takes on life and becomes an expletive that mirrors the Chicano's view of himself.

When the Chicano poet deals with the barrio, he invariably must deal with its extensions, which go beyond the physical context of the barrio—the experiences of *la pinta* (the joint/prison), escape into the military, the labyrinths of bureaucracy (national, state, local, university, government and industry). In essence, most Chicanos retain the feel and psychology of the barrio, for even those who have made it still respond with a *grito*\* in their moments of anomie and social abnegation. Mariachis and their music are a paradox within the soul-conscience of the Chicanos—an Elysian euphony to love and a lament of death and the dying of love. Similarly, poetry for most Chicanos—especially those in the movement—becomes a *grito*: an expression of liberation (*I am Chicano!*) and a serious questioning of the system (we are brutalized!).

The Chicano poet uses poetry to express conditions that do exist, do plague and do cripple the Chicano masses; he protests, expands on his hope and creates fleeting images of a world where the Chicano can and must be master of his own destiny. A transformation has come about in the barrios—the barrio Chicano has now become politicized and societally aware of all that is possible to him, if the society in which he survives becomes flexible enough to accord him his place. In

\* outcry

the process, he has begun to articulate the poetry he has always felt, while rejecting a materialistic structure. The result, thus far, has been a self-affirmation, oftentimes a journeying to the very beginning of history in the Western Hemisphere; a poetic outlet for sublimating the realities of social frustration, abnegation and anomie. The Chicano poet, instead of writing graffiti on the barrio walls, now pens questions and hopes, and in this is poetically demanding a serious response from the society he still views as a system bent on his annihilation or assimilation.

Chicano writers perforce are activists with racial/ethnic social mandates. Within the mandate for the creation of a new literature is the unspoken command to bring about an understanding of the language. Chicano language is like all languages in transition—the merging of other languages and social influences. It is in the merging of human diversity that we can see growth and humanistic evolvement. A correct language is one that communicates—and within its communicativeness, it should grow and develop—not only new words, but new ways to express the worlds of language we live in. So it is with Chicano literature—Español and English merging as a base to create another apex of human expression.

We are a new people, but not in the sense that we just sprang up. We are a new people because we have just recently begun to define our humanity through our own art forms and social interpretations within the mass media. By our own definitions shall we be known, not by the sly or off-handed characterizations of Anglo sociologists out to make a name for themselves. Because a new generation of Chicanos has determined that we will be the ones to determine our own destinies, because we have begun to reexamine all social conditioning, because we are recording the reality of the Chicano, it can now be said that there is indeed a new people that is stamping its name on history.

It is sad to realize that of all the hundreds of thousands of various groups of people who have existed, we know only of those who created art forms that lived on beyond them. Man's history and his evolution have an infinity of anonymous pages, for man's need for survival is sometimes so great he cannot afford the time nor the luxury of writing/painting out

his reality. Fortunately for us, Chicanos have now begun to write Chicano history and literature, and in the process share the many-sided realities of *la vida* with all who care to further mankind's humanistic trajectory.

As the hopes of a people build up, new worlds come into focus, and the words of first creation link together past and present. Chicano literature keeps time to the beat of many drums. It is not only about poverty; it is not only about hurt and the socialization process, but rather about all the human and social needs of *La Raza*. \* Need is not confined to the physical; it is also spiritual—the quality that can be found wherever and whenever a human being poses questions on the why of existence. Our literature is humorous, for our lives reek with *cabula*, Chicano jive. It is serious; it is built on hope and love; it exists.

\* The Mexican-American people

## ✓ ALURISTA

### Mis ojos hinchados

Mis ojos hinchados  
flooded with lágrimas  
de bronce  
melting on the cheek bones  
of my concern  
razgos indígenas  
the scars of history on my face  
and the veins of my body  
that aches  
vomito sangre  
y lloro libertad  
I do not ask for freedom  
I *am* freedom  
no one  
not even Yahweh  
and his thunder  
can pronounce  
and on a stone  
la ley del hombre esculpir  
no puede  
mi libertad  
and the round tables

---

*Mis ojos hinchados*: my swollen eyes

*lágrimas de bronce*: brass tears

*razgos indígenas*: native (Indian) features

*vomito sangre*: I vomit blood

*y lloro libertad*: and I weep for liberty

*la ley del hombre esculpir no puede*: he cannot engrave the law of man

*mi libertad*: my freedom

of ice cream  
     hot dog  
 meat ball lovers meet  
 to rap  
     and rap  
 and I hunger  
     y mi boca está seca  
 el agua cristalina  
     y la verdad  
 transparent  
 in a cup  
     is never poured  
 dust gathers on the shoulders  
     of dignitaries  
 y de dignidad  
     no saben nada  
 muertos en el polvo  
     they bite the earth  
 and return  
     to dust

---

*y mi boca está seca:* and my mouth is dry

*el agua cristalina:* the crystal water

*y la verdad:* and truth

*y de dignidad no saben nada:* and they know nothing of dignity

*muertos en el polvo:* dead in the dust

*Epictetus 1st cent AD*

✓ **JORGE ALVAREZ**

**Autobiography in Maize**

*Aztec*

I am a Quetzal *corn*  
Who wakes up green  
With wings of gold  
And cannot fly;

I am the ear  
Of Epictetus  
Written on the Roman lash,  
While the Sundays bring  
The black-shawled hundreds  
To the fore;

*Asquid*

I am the stiff volcano *Aztec built volcano*  
Sitting on grey hair,  
And mangled hands  
Pull up the hod  
To start another day;

I am the candle  
Under images in empty rooms  
Where bare feet  
Paint mosaics  
On the moon;

I am the parachute  
Painted  
On the Aztec risers  
Leading to the sky;

I am the book  
Torn sideways in despair

To drop the image  
Of an old man  
Dancing in the square;

I am the eye  
Of a small child  
With stains of corn  
Upon his teeth;

I am the dark horizon  
Of old homes  
And the Quetzal  
He will someday see.

## MARINA DE BELLAGENTE

I am the land. I wait.

I am the land. I wait.  
You say you own me.  
I wait.

You shout. I lie patient.  
You buy me. I wait.  
With muddy holes and  
car lot eyes I stare . . .

Then someone  
tickles me, plants life—fruit  
grass—trees/ children dance/ someone  
Sings

You come with guns  
A chainlink necklace  
chokes me now

I wait.  
YOU CANNOT PUT A FENCE  
AROUND THE PLANET EARTH.  
I am the land. I wait.



# RENÉ CÁRDENAS

## La muerte del Sr. Durán

*“¿Es usted uno de los Buenos?”*

was the first he ever spoke to me.

Have I or we ever known if we are from the Best?

Do we aspire for God's best,

Man's best even?

*¿O qué?*

El Sr. Durán asked me for my patronym—

all names are great in Mexico—

and had known some good ones . . .

Have we ever known some good ones? Good

men for us to be with, their sons or daughters?

*“¿Es usted uno de los Buenos?”*

was the last he ever spoke to me.

Soy Chicano: I am the best, but not of Duran's

Good Ones. *¿Y tu?*

Soon after I saw him at the hospital, drawn and  
unrelenting

(like a caged eagle inside that cancer-ripped frame),

in church an usher handed me a hymn

sheet in Spanish. I looked at him in surprise and he

motioned, saying softly, *“Hay hágale no más, que*

*li'ase.”* So I

sang a little—the hell with them.

---

*¿Es usted uno de los Buenos?:* Are  
you one of the good ones?

*¿O que?:* or what?

*El Sr. Durán:* Mr. Duran

*Soy Chicano:* I am a Chicano

*¿Y tu?:* and you?

*Hay hágale no más, que*

*li'ase:* Just fake it, what  
does it matter.

*Así el Sr. Durán*

living for what he wanted:  
 they say that he was a sucker for hungry bums,  
 migrant workers, deadbeat winos who came  
 to his restaurant—  
 he gave five dollars and fifty cents worth  
 of lunch tickets for promises never turned to  
 gold. He was a good one for Chicanos.  
 In the last year he played a mental chess  
 game *con la calavera*; he was living because  
 he wanted to.

He had no head for business, he ran the world  
 to suit himself—you didn't have to know him.  
 The revolution brought him to Arizona—  
 he had pesos in a glass jar to pay his land  
 taxes, he raised tall sons and daughters.  
 I saw him when he was finally letting go,  
 telling death to go to hell,  
 dying because he wanted to.  
 And the last thing he ever said  
 of all the best things he ever said,  
 of the Revolution y la Chicanada—  
 “*¿Es usted uno de los Buenos?*”

---

*Así el Sr. Durán*: and so Mr. Duran  
*con la calavera*: with the (his) skull

# ABELARDO DELGADO

## Icon

the mariachi, esterophonized  
made me realize  
that sundays in el paso,  
los angeles and denver  
are a very lonely thing,  
they have a way of erasing  
church people until you  
are alone with the marble  
and wooden statues  
and the color t.v.  
with o.j.simpson  
running and namath throwing  
is dark even when on  
and restaurants become  
peopleless  
where you order your breakfast  
through a microphone  
and it comes  
through an aluminum door  
and all of a sudden  
you also realize  
that for the brevity  
of a deep breath  
you no longer have a wife,  
children, father, mother,  
brothers or friends  
or lovers . . .  
and your plain pale blue shirt  
has yesterday's sweat  
and the rug  
under your feet  
is soft

but you have taken off  
 and the chest pains  
 you had as you inhaled  
 blend with the  
 hazy sunday  
 in the middle of september  
 a picture of god you cannot help remember. . . .

## ANTHONY D'ESPOSITO

### In Five Hundred Years

My father hunted the great mammoth  
 And I am only five hundred years old  
 Who can still remember the blood of Montezuma  
 And the crying at Wounded Knee

And I am only five hundred years old  
 Who yesterday was herded on a trail of tears  
 And a hundred Sand Creeks flow  
 Through veins my Indian heart feeds

And I am only five hundred years old  
 And my dream is just now beginning  
 As the drums of "Unity" throb by spirit  
 And all of the people do a round dance

And our Mother Earth is in round dance  
 And all the stars circle our eagle dream  
 And the children of Aztlan run and play  
 I'm glad to be a youth of only five hundred years

# ESTUPINIAN

## In Our House

Smells

like endless strings  
of *chorizos*

squirm from the past  
and we sort them  
from sounds

from sweet-smelling orange juice  
puddles on oil cloth

“... *el niño necesita zapatos*”

stick from morning and . . .

“*Saca la guitarra . . .*”

and we lay in beds  
damp . . . damn coldness  
smell damp

“*y que siga la parranda . . .*”

my brother's feet are cold  
like a pup's nose

“*y que bonito canta Ines!*”

like the smell  
of orange juice puddles  
like endless strings  
of Agustin Lara  
and strings of *chorizos*.

---

*chorizos*: Spanish-type sausages  
*el niño necesita zapatos*: the boy  
needs shoes  
*saca la guitarra*: take the guitar

*y que siga la parranda*: the fun  
should continue  
*y que bonito canta Ines*: and how  
lovely is Ines's singing

## Indian, You Travel

Indian, you travel all the roads of America,  
Sometimes over peaks that rise from the earth  
and break through the blue curve of heaven  
to peer at infinity;  
Sometimes through the lands that burn  
You with the fire of the tropics;  
Your feet mount the roads of weariness  
You water the distances  
With the sweat of your brown muscles;  
You still carry on your dark backs  
the cacaxtle, the crate, of burdens  
Laid upon you by Pedro de Alvarado, the  
Conquistador.

Listen to me:

I, too, am Indian,  
Another man of your race,  
Another son of America  
Who travels along the roads of my life,  
Roads sometimes steep, harsh, and difficult,  
Sometimes level, but rough and wearisome,  
And I anoint my road with rebellion,  
Sweating I hold tight infinite anxieties  
And I carry my load of anguish  
Of hopes and dreams  
On the numbed back of my soul.

Indian, let us trade our burdens,  
Perhaps your crate of roasting stones,  
Of big jars and fruits,  
Is not so heavy -  
As the enormous load I carry on my soul.

*Chicano is questioning his "Indianness."*

# JUAN GARCIA

## My People

Just as lightning that rips  
apart a tree so deeply  
embedded in the earth

My people have the strength  
to rip apart this cruel system  
that subjects us since our birth  
Like the winds that tear through  
the mountain peaks so cold so high.

My people will tear through this  
society that has nothing to offer  
but its lies.

Like the power of the sun  
that radiates and makes things grow

The power of our strength  
will break through the bondage  
that destroys us so.

Unlike this system that creates  
a world of fantasy to keep  
from seeing the truth

My people will be the light  
that man saw first when  
he was earth's fruit  
Not like the corruption that

permeates in the minds of men  
fat and blown.

My people are the flowers  
and the blossoms of the  
earth not yet full grown.

## ✓ LUIS GARCIA

### The Cage

Someone is turning lips of gold  
into ditches of blood  
millions of dollars  
are falling in love  
with a coffin.

The eggs of suicide  
hatching thousands of corpses  
nourish  
one jungle after another.

Screaming leaves  
and the smoke from villages  
that never quit burning  
invade the eyes of oblivion.

Let's try to imitate  
the voice of an umbrella  
says a clown to the people  
who know that living  
can be a gentle game.

A candle of tears  
with the voice of a lemon exclaims



the violets in your grandmother's garden  
are my cousins.

An angel who makes windows that fly  
and inhabits an elevator  
at the bottom of a lake  
melts a chain  
with the voice he keeps  
in the bones of his fingers.

So it all comes down to this—  
a voice that doesn't exist  
except when the door of a cage  
is accidentally left open.

## MANUEL GOMEZ

### We Are Beautiful!

BEGINNING  
THE RED SUN'S  
SWORD SLASHES  
MY SOUL  
AND BLACK BLOOD  
FLOWS FROM MY DARKNESS  
I AM THE SON OF AN  
ANCIENT PEOPLE  
MY POEMS ARE MY TEARS  
TEARS OF BLOOD  
AND FIRE

# ✓ RODOLFO GONZALES

## *from* I Am Joaquin

I am Joaquin,  
Lost in a world of confusion,  
Caught up in a whirl of an  
    Anglo society,  
Confused by the rules,  
Scorned by attitudes,  
Suppressed by manipulations,  
And destroyed by modern society.  
My fathers  
    have lost the economic battle  
and won  
    the struggle of cultural survival.  
And now!  
    I must choose  
        Between  
    the paradox of  
Victory of the spirit,  
despite physical hunger  
        Or  
    to exist in the grasp  
of American social neurosis,  
sterilization of the soul  
    and a full stomach.

Yes,  
I have come a long way to nowhere,  
Unwillingly dragged by that  
    monstrous, technical  
    industrial giant called  
        Progress

and Anglo success . . .

I look at myself.

I watch my brothers.

I shed tears of sorrow.

I sow seeds of hate.

I withdraw to the safety within the  
Circle of life . . .

MY OWN PEOPLE . . .

I have endured in the rugged mountains  
of our country  
I have survived the toils and slavery  
of the fields.

I have existed  
in the barrios of the city,  
in the suburbs of bigotry,  
in the mines of social snobbery,  
in the prisons of dejection,  
in the muck of exploitation  
and  
in the fierce heat of racial hatred.

And now the trumpet sounds,  
The music of the people stirs the  
Revolution,  
Like a sleeping giant it slowly  
rears its head  
to the sound of  
Tramping feet  
Clamouring voices  
Mariachi strains  
Fiery tequila explosions  
The smell of chile verde and  
Soft brown eyes of expectation for a  
better life.

And in all the fertile farm lands,  
the barren plains,  
the mountain villages,  
smoke smeared cities

We start to MOVE.

La Raza!  
Mejicano!  
Español!  
Latino!  
Hispano!  
Chicano!

or whatever I call myself,  
I look the same  
I feel the same  
I cry  
and  
Sing the same

I am the masses of my people and  
I refuse to be absorbed.

I am Joaquin  
The odds are great  
but my spirit is strong  
My faith unbreakable  
My blood is pure  
I am Aztec Prince and Christian Christ  
I SHALL ENDURE!  
I WILL ENDURE!

*You are responsible for your own  
destiny*

# GRAFFITI

## 7th Street

When I walk down  
our street  
I am afraid  
I am afraid  
not of the meager lights  
or of the boys  
grown old before their time . . .

But of the white helmets  
that hold lead-weighted night sticks  
that prod and poke and irritate  
till a red film runs over my eye  
until I am forced to strike . . .

Too late, too late to stop  
for now I will wake up  
hurt and bruised all over  
leaving a spasm of pain  
not through my body  
but through my soul . . .

Where in a Chicano  
it hurts most of all

For now  
when I go down the street  
I will no longer be afraid  
for when I go down  
one will be below me  
and one above . . .

Only then, in the other land  
 will I stand  
 and be counted  
 among the people

LA RAZA

## JOSÉ ANGEL GUTIERREZ

### 22 miles

From 22 I see my first 8 weren't.  
 Around the 9th, I was called "meskin,"  
 By the 10th, I knew and believed I was.  
 I found out what it meant to know, to believe  
 . . . before my 13th.

Through brown eyes, seeing only brown colors and  
 feeling only  
 brown feelings . . . I saw . . . I felt . . . I hated . . . I  
 cried . . . I tried  
 . . . I didn't understand during these 4.  
 I rested by just giving up.

While, on the side . . . I realized I *believed* in  
 white as pretty,  
 my being governor  
 blond blue-eyed baby Jesus,  
 cokes and hamburgers  
 equality for all regardless of race, creed, or  
 color,  
 Mr. Williams, our banker.  
 I had to!  
 That was all I had.

Beams and Communism were bad.

Past the weeds, atop the hill, I  
looked back.

Pretty people, combed and squeaky clean, on  
arrowlike roads.

Pregnant girls, ragged brats, swarthy machos, rosary  
beads,

and friends waddle clumsily over and across hills,  
each other,

mud, cold, and woods on caliche ruts.

At the 19th mile, I fought blindly at everything and  
anything.

Not knowing, Not caring about WHY, WHEN, or  
FOR WHAT.

I fought. And fought.

By the 21st, I was tired and tried.

But now . . .

I've been told that I am dangerous.

That is because I am good at not being a Mexican.

That is because I know now that I have been cheated.

That is because I hate circumstances and love  
choices.

You know . . . chorizo tacos y tortillas ARE good,  
even at school.

Speaking Spanish is a talent.

Being Mexican IS as good as Rainbo bread.

And without looking back, I know that there are still  
too many

brown babies,

pregnant girls,

old 25-year-old women,

drunks,

who should have lived but didn't,

on those caliche ruts.

It is tragic that my problems during these  
 past 21 miles were/are/might be . . .  
 looking into blue eyes,  
 wanting to touch a gringita,  
 ashamed of being Mexican,  
 believing I could not make it at college,  
 pretending that I liked my side of town,

remembering the Alamo,  
 speaking Spanish in school bathrooms only  
 and knowing that Mexico's prostitutes like  
 Americans better.

At 22, my problems are still the same but now I know  
 I am your  
 problem  
 That farm boys, Mexicans and Negro boys are in  
 Vietnam is but one  
 thing I think about:

Crystal City, Texas 78839  
 The migrant worker;  
 The good gringo:

Staying Mexican enough;  
 Helping;  
 Looking at the world from the back of a truck.

The stoop labor with high school rings on their  
 fingers;  
 The Anglo cemetery,  
 Joe the different Mexican,

Damn.

Damn.

Damn.



# JOHN FELIPE HERRERA

## A Certain Man

The man over there  
with educated fingers and fast  
    clouds  
around his flag  
rolls his shirt sleeves & calls  
a taxi from church . . .  
His eyeteeth clap like his family  
for an encore of southwest earth  
wolfed with fever  
. . . . Skilled and styled to believe  
that Moctezuma blood & spirit  
. . . . are dead, as he pumps  
a book through his ears.  
Inside his stomach  
roast meat (battered in  
    philosophy)  
makes yellow drops  
on his hide overboil down  
to his buttons.  
Only heavy fur pulls  
his head to a pillow  
rusting completely overnight  
. . . . like his prayer.

---

*Moctezuma*; the Mexicans use this spelling rather than  
"Montezuma."

## Creciendo en el barrio

Creciendo en el barrio  
Muriendo en las calles  
La historia de la Raza  
De la gente brava

And so they grow—the little brown babies  
From hope to hate

I

A flash/of excitement  
As the iron monsters roar by  
And the vino flows freely  
At the eternal street corner party  
“Madre de dios, estoy un poco high.”

2

And the gringo comes down to the barrio  
To buy piñatas y dulces

---

*Creciendo en el barrio*: growing up in the barrio

*Muriendo en las calles*: dying in the streets

*La historia de la Raza*: the history of the people (*La Raza* refers to the Mexicans as an ethnic-cultural entity.)

*De la gente brava*: of the (brave, angry, wild) people; *bravo*, (*a*) has all these meanings.

*vino*: wine

*Madre de dios, estoy un poco high*: Mother of God, I am a little high

*piñatas y dulces*: *Piñata* is a Mexican clay jug filled with goodies; it is broken by the children in a game. *Dulces* are sweets.

And comment on the filth  
 Of our unswept, child littered streets  
 "How can they live that way Henry  
 When personal hygiene is so basic?"

3

Saturday night/with nothing but reds  
 Sit on the sidewalk and dream

4

And in the clinics niños die  
 Before and after birth  
 "Far too many Mexicans in this town"  
 "Don't they breed like rabbits though/"

5

They go to school, we go to school y  
     aprendemos nada  
 Because there is nothing for us to learn  
 The street has taught us all/  
 Made us worldly wise  
 Survival by example, not by book

---

*niños*: children

*aprendemos nada*: we learn nothing

6

Y los hermanos look around  
Learn of Che, Sandino, Villa  
Find our culture is not standing  
But running swiftly forward  
A revolutionary spirit kills no friends

And so the babies grow  
From hope to righteous hate

La historia de la Raza  
De la gente brava  
Luchando para vivir  
Viviendo para luchar

---

*Y los hermanos*: and the brothers

*Luchando para vivir*: fighting in order to live

*Viviendo para luchar*: living in order to fight

✓ M. JÁUREGUI

Untitled [sin título]

Dirty little Mexican!

Dirty little Mexican!

—¿Por que me odian tanto papa?

—¿Por que me odian tanto mama?

I walked to school, miles to school

What a fool fool fool

FOOL!

Stupid little Mexican,

So long ago. . . . in school.

—Hijito, te peliates otra vez. Cómo me

Duele tanto verte peliando en las calles.

—Si, mama, si, mamacita.

Como le duele tanto a una madre.

—HO! We have a very good shop program, Pancho.

—You are so skillful with your hands.

Go to trade school!

GO TO TRADE SCHOOL!

(fool)

---

*¿Por que me odian tanto papa?:* Why do they hate me so, Papa?

*Hijito, te peliates otra vez. Cómo me duele tanto verte*

*pegiando en las calles:* Little son, you've been fighting again. How it  
hurts me to see you fighting in the streets.

*Si, mama, si, mamacita. Como le duele tanto a una madre:* Yes,  
Mama, yes, little mama. How it hurts a mother.

—Mira mamacita te hice una lamparita.  
 —Mira papa te hice un “stand” para tus pipas.

—Que bueno es m’hijo.  
 Lamps for mama—many lamps  
 Mom still has them.  
 Pipe racks for papa  
 Papa never smoked a pipe.

Dear Mom and Dad,  
 Cómo extraño el amor de mis padres aquí.  
 Today I finished boot camp, mama. Tomorrow  
 we get our orders. I expect to get into radio  
 school because I did so good in the test  
 Love  
 Your son

González  
 Pérez  
 Ramírez  
 López

F.M.F.  
 Infantry  
 VIETNAM!

---

*Mira mamacita te hice una lamparita:* Look, Mama, I made you a little lamp.  
*Mira papa te hice un “stand” para tus pipas:* Look, Papa, I made you a stand for your pipes.  
*Que bueno es m’hijo:* How good our son is.  
*Cómo extraño el amor de mis padres aquí:* How I miss my parents’ love here.

Jones, radio school  
Smith, radar school

### Hijo

Como nos da tristesa que estas tan lejos de nosotros.  
Reso todos los dias por ti. Tu papa no a podido  
travajar  
mucho esta semana por las lluvias. Cuidate hijo  
Tu Madre y Padre  
Que te quieren mucho.

—I'm sorry, sir, we don't have anything for unskilled workers.

—May I suggest you go to the farm labor office.

—They are always looking for workers.

MIERDA!

—Hey, Punk, come over here. —No Sir.

—Hay, Punk, Where is your I.D. —No officer.

—Hay, Mex, Smoking any marihuana lately? —No,  
Pig.

—Hay, Chicano, Get your hands over your head. —No

—No Pinch! Chango Cabrón

Basta Basta Bastardo

YA BASTA!

---

*Hijo, como nos da tristesa que estas tan lejos de nosotros:* Son, how sad it makes us that you are so far from us.

*Reso todos los dias por ti. Tu papa no a podido travajar mucho esta semana por las lluvias. Cuidate hijo. Tu Madre y Padre que te quieren mucho:* I pray every day for you. Your father could not work much this week because of the rain. Take care of yourself, son. Your father and mother who love you very much.

*Mierda:* shit

*Chango:* monkey

*Cabrón:* he-goat, cuckold

*Basta:* enough

*Bastardo:* bastard

M. JUNGE

Upon Submitting Proposals  
for Federally Funded Summer Programs

You and I. We know  
Each other well,  
We are dealers  
in important words,  
Dabblers in heavy concepts.  
We meet to flick  
Our tongues deliciously  
Across profound ideas.  
We nod and smile.  
We understand.

So spring comes again  
and like a lover gone  
Mad with meaning,  
I send you solemnly  
This year's ponderous supply  
Of words.  
Neatly typed  
and double spaced  
That you asked me for.  
And couched in poetry.

I send you a poem of poverty's wars.  
I sing of jobs and work experiences  
And training for disadvantaged  
And deprived and disenfranchised youth  
With grass or other kinds of roots  
From impacted areas of inner cities  
And ghettos and barrios  
To help their self-images and self-concepts  
And give them growth experiences



That are meaningful and creative  
 and life-changing  
 WOWIE—ZOWIE—ZAP!!!

You respond pleasantly enough  
 in triplicate. Asking only  
 That I fill out  
 One million count them  
 important forms in quadruplicate  
 Mailing each one to fifteen different  
 important persons, sitting in 63 different  
 Offices, taking hundreds of days  
 Calling themselves bureaucrats  
 Who as we all know  
 Are the keepers of the red tape

And you will send me post haste  
 By return mail, if not sooner,  
 The bread.

But I know a sweet-faced young dude  
 in blue knit cap  
 With paint on his nostrils from  
 Sniffing and on his jacket  
 Who writes his name on  
 My house and still high  
 Steals the battery out of my car  
 Because mistakenly he thinks  
 It will run his stolen tape deck.  
 Who does not ever go to school  
 And thus cannot achieve the lofty  
 Rank of dropout.  
 The invisible man all too visible

By his acts  
 Known mostly to the guys at juvie and camp  
 But not to his own mother.

And one thing bothers me:  
 What does that young dude know  
 Of our important words? What does he  
 Care for our heavy concepts? What can even  
 Our bread do for the  
 Already too enduringly human quality  
 Of his all too personal  
 And almost-over life?

## DIANA LOPEZ

### Sestina: Santa Prisca

One would think that these  
 Dry standards of pink stone  
 Would whip the wind with iron  
 Tongues and speak the word  
 Kept by their chiseled, gesticulating saints  
 Weeping dust tears upon the courtyard floor.

From the chequered, knee-rubbed floor  
 Rise supplications cast with wings of iron  
 To perch with gentle claws upon the word  
 "God" carved with gold upon the pimpled stone.  
 Futile as this chasuble of rock, these  
 Prayers can never tame the gestures of the saints.

Now the sun strikes with glory the cold saints  
 Forcing their lips to simulate a word

Voiced to silver by the bells of iron.  
 Each note a silver globule floats to crack these  
 Shallow crystals of the morning hours lying on the  
     floor  
 And scatter their potions of tranquility on the stone.

It is not time for winds to ruffle the starched stone  
 Which clothes the rock-ribbed bosoms of the saints  
 And checks the pulses of the word.  
 It will never be time to resuscitate these  
 Dead theologies groveling on the vestry floor  
 Rehearsing one-time truths from vellums bound in  
     iron.

The lacework of the sun-forged iron  
 Is not wide enough to let the saints  
 Escape wearing their still phylacteries of stone.  
 The bougainvillaea climbs its progress from the floor  
 To leave its purple kisses on the saints' lips; these  
 Let the bits of passion drop, but keep the precious  
     word.

But it is there, the tongue-tied word  
 Encapsuled in its throats of iron,  
 To shake to truth the rock-hinged saints  
 Hanging like dead murmurs above the ocean floor.  
 The matutinal orations will rise on plumes of stone  
 And the loud tongues of candles whisper: "Listen to  
     these."

The bells of iron will testify their love and these  
 Flowers on the floor become testaments from which  
     the saints  
 Will preach the golden word and the green life-stone.

## GABRIEL O. LOPEZ

### Doing Time

When you dream of girls and wake  
up leaning against cold steel  
    You're doing time

When you hate the ring of a bell  
with a passion  
    You're doing time

When you jump out of bed, use  
the toilet and wash your face  
without taking another step  
    You're doing time

When you watch seasons flash  
by your window  
    You're doing time

When you write letters and can't  
think of what to say  
    You're doing time

When your room only has forty  
square feet of floor space  
    You're doing time

When you start looking and  
feeling old  
    You've done time.

# RAMÓN MARTINEZ

## Cow Comes Home

“After nine years, cow finally  
comes home,”  
read the local paper’s  
headlines.

Where did you go,  
Bossy?  
Why did you come  
home?

Didn’t you like the  
billboards  
on the freeways as you sped  
away?

And surely you were  
pleased  
by the spics at that drive-in  
theatre.

Did you run back  
home  
Because you didn’t like  
John Wayne’s face?

Or did the nice  
drunk  
stop feeding you all the peanut-butter cups  
he had?

Did you miss the

blue-eyed  
farmer, with his machine washable  
wife?

Tell me, Bossy, when your  
parade  
ended, were you  
glad?

When your old bones  
carried you  
into the old  
pasture,

Tell me, Bossy, as you  
smiled,  
did the farmer  
cry?

## **JOSÉ MONTOYA**

### **Sunstruck While Chopping Cotton**

It was at first a single image.  
A mirage-like illusional dance  
Wavering and decomposing in the  
Distance like a plastic mosaic.

Then it cleared.

Not one but three Bothisattvas  
Suspended in a cloud of yellow dust  
Just above the rows of cotton  
Gallop comically on skeletal mounts

Across the arid, sponge-like lust  
Of a desiccated desert.

They ride by, shouting in ruthless unison  
The name of Jesus, across the valley  
Halting not for an instant in their trek  
To the distant sea.

The cool sea.

With flame throwers for nostrils  
Their horses flee  
Abreast the three  
Halting whole freeways of awe-stricken traffic  
And scattering chattering choppers  
Welcoming the enormous episode as an excuse  
For frolic fanfare.

They enter the sea and immediately get  
cut down by surfboards sharp as razors  
And oil-well derricks entangle them  
And the horses, not being divine, drown.  
And the Bothisattvas, mountless in the mire  
Choke and struggle, making the Longbeach waters  
Thick with blood, mud and crude oil.

But they are determined, and they walk  
Nimbly and bloodied on the cracked-mirror  
Surface with all the humility of the East  
Then they forget and break into a run  
Leaving bloodied footprints upon the blue waters,  
Running, running toward the setting sun

Shouting, Jesus saves!  
In ruthless unison.

## ORLANDO ORTIZ

### Reflections of an Inarticulate Childhood

the caves were lit  
by faces drawn  
in a hazy pose  
of urined dreams,  
through the summer air  
my drumbeat rang  
like carousels of sound,  
I heard and danced  
a savage dance  
knife gleams at my feet,  
you saw me run  
over naked glass  
eyes biting in the sun  
a wolf-child speed  
of rocks and bricks  
as windows shattered gleaming sticks  
gaping mouths exploding water,  
gushed my skin, aware almost  
of what it felt.  
i bathed the flesh  
of my animal self  
alive to the instinct  
of closing death  
white in law  
and in fact  
the old woman who bore me  
came to terms  
and a kind of peace,  
but i ran to touch and seek  
what must be there



ebon skin woman  
she rattled the eyes  
on loose summer days  
when children clank  
with shoes of tin  
and sweepers push  
against the noonday tar.  
whoring games of youthful play  
were sweated august days,  
the first surprising touch  
and mystery thereof grew  
moistened by her warmth  
and swelling visions  
on summer beds  
played flaming walls  
of rounded flesh  
across the bricklike  
prison of your mind,  
you felt the need  
to taste her flesh  
and swim your head afire  
across her chest  
and pause reflect  
upon the rising bone  
and curve of shoulder warmth,  
to reach her nervous thighs  
engulfed in vaginal smiles  
knowing her blackness  
and your fantasy,  
bitch of sensua

## GUADALUPE de SAAVEDRA

### IF You Hear that a Thousand People Love You

IF you hear that a thousand people love you  
remember . . . saavedra is among them.

IF you hear that a hundred people love you  
remember . . . saavedra is either in the first  
or very last row

IF you hear that seven people love you  
remember . . . saavedra is among them,  
like a wednesday in the middle of the week

IF you hear that two people love you  
remember . . . one of them is saavedra

IF you hear that only one person loves you  
remember . . . he is saavedra

AND when you see no one else around you,  
and you find out,  
that no one loves you anymore,  
then you will know for certain  
that . . . saavedra is dead

• OMAR SALINAS

Aztec Angel

I

I am an Aztec angel  
criminal  
of a scholarly  
society  
I do favors  
for whimsical  
magicians  
where I pawn  
my heart  
for truth  
and find  
my way  
through obscure  
streets  
of soft spoken  
hara-kiris

II

I am an Aztec angel  
forlorn passenger  
on a train  
of chicken farmers  
and happy children

III

I am the Aztec angel  
fraternal partner  
of an orthodox  
society

where pachuca children  
 hurl stones  
 through poetry rooms  
 and end up in a cop car  
 their bones itching  
 and their hearts  
 busted from malnutrition

IV

I am the Aztec angel  
 who frequents bars  
 spends evenings  
 with literary circles  
 and socializes  
 with spiks  
 niggers and wops  
 and collapses on his way  
 to funerals

V

Drunk  
 lonely  
 bespectacled  
 the sky  
 opens my veins  
 like rain  
 clouds go berserk  
 around me  
 my Mexican ancestors  
 chew my fingernails

I am an Aztec angel  
 offspring  
 of a woman  
 who was beautiful

## RICARDO SÁNCHEZ

### Introduction to Abelardo

we shall joke and carry on til eternity freezes over; we shall work late at night trying to sensitize a frigid amerika, and our sweat shall drown us . . . still it has been worth it, carnal, knowing your madness and your sometimes off the wall responses—for even in your jests you are deathly serious . . . so serious that you are a measurable menace to those who prefer not to think . . . write on, carnal, or rejo in our minds and souls; involve humanity in your quest for freedom—for even a quixote like you can have the soul of el cid and cuauhtemoc . . . carve your feelings on the bosom of this bitching country, that truth might prevail . . .

out of the holocaust that seems imminent, beneath the atomic strewn rubble, beyond the racist idiocy of this selfish country let your poetry prevail—a beacon guiding lost souls to a possible salvation . . .

be that purgative that will clean out the rancidness from the gaping bowels of amerika.

you are free enough, abelardo, to write realistically about your hurts and lacks—realistic enough to accept your own human frailty . . . realistic enough to only demand that humanity

---

*carnal*: blood brother

*rejo*: spike (also, figuratively, strength)

be human—and not for a machinistic plasticity  
that can only react racistly . . .

this is how I view you, compa, from the coils  
of my own brand of idiocy. . . .

## HUGO STANCHI

### To Buss's Grandma

Black Mother  
who held my colored daughter's pink hand  
and whispered ancient knowledge of times past into  
her ear;

Black Mother  
with hands of pearl  
and rubber-sandaled feet  
that trod the day-to-day living rooms,  
where at last  
people stand and stare  
and silently bow  
as they fade  
into the fabric  
of the empty shells  
of their collective soul,  
Black Mother—

I thank you.

---

*compa*: dialect for *compadre*,  
i.e., landsman, compatriot

✓ LUIS TALAMANTEZ

*from* (Reflections) of a Convict

WEBS OF LAST NIGHT'S SLEEP SLIP AWAY

FROM MY DRY EYES

AS THE NOISES INCREASE AROUND ME

I FEEL THE CHILL OF DECEMBER

ON MY NAKED BODY AND

I REACH BLINDLY

FOR MY FALLEN BLANKETS THAT I LIFT

FROM THE CELL'S COLD FLOOR AND

I THINK

OF THE DAY AHEAD

WITH A SIMILAR THEME AS IN MY DREAMS

WHERE ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN

ANYTHING MIGHT COME LOOSE.

AND OF THINGS TO DO . . . . . HERE

SO THAT BOREDOM WILL NOT OVERCOME ME

SO THAT TIME WILL GO ON

FOR ONE MORE DAY

JUST A DAY AT A TIME

IS ALL I ATTEMPT

AT ONE TIME. . . . . NOW.

THIS DAY WILL BE A LONG ONE

IT IS CHRISTMAS

I STILL CAN WONDER AT WHAT

THIS MEX BOY

IS DOING HERE IN THIS WRONG PLACE

MY MOTHER

SHE DID NOT TELL ME  
OF THESE PLACES

BUT

SHE DID NOT HAVE NO CHANCE TO  
EITHER

OR

MAYBE SHE THOUGHT HER HIJO WOULD NEVER  
FIND HIS WAY HERE. . . .

WHEN I HEAR FROM MY AGED ABUELA  
WHO HAS TAKEN HER PLACE

SHE ASKS

IF I AM COLD? BUT

*(In your heart)*

SHE DOES NOT MEAN IF

I HAVE ENOUGH CLOTHES  
OR A COAT

SHE IS OLD AND WRINKLED

AND SHE IS WISE

SHE HAS KNOWN

HERSELF

THE WAYS OF THE PALE FOREIGNERS

IN OUR LAND AND WAY OF LIFE

ALWAYS

THE BRINGERS OF OUR TROUBLES

THE INQUISITORS

BECKONING TO US WITH THEIR CROOK'D FINGERS

THEIR REDNECKS AND PANZAS SWOLLEN

WITH POISONS

OF GREED AND CONSUMPTION

---

*hijo*: son

*abuela*: grandmother

*panzas*: bellies





ON A SPECK  
WHAT THE HECK!  
BUT NO ONE LAUGHS  
BUT I REMEMBER WHEN GRANMA CRIED SILENTLY . . .  
NOW NO ONE CAN TELL HER THAT  
THE AMERICANO  
DOES NOT HAVE HER NIETO (GRANDSON)  
PRISONER  
HURTING HIM SILENTLY AS OUR PEOPLE  
HAVE LEARNED  
TO BE HURT  
KEEPING HIM  
SO THAT SHE MAY NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN  
EITHER  
YET  
HERE IN MY OWN HEART  
THE WILL TO LIVE  
LIVES ON  
QUE TE PASA ABUELITA?  
  
I AM ALWAYS HUNGRY NOW  
MY HUNGER  
AND THE YEARN TO BE FREE  
WILL NEVER  
DIE

---

*nieto*: grandson

*que te pasa abuelita?*: what is  
happening to you, dear grandmother?

REFLECTIONS ON BEING IN PRISON... LIFE

# TIGRE

## To Venture

To behold, to be told  
More or less in an ancient scroll  
A stranger in a lost paradise,  
Where no man ventures to be wise  
The whiting burning in Egypt of all has no demands,  
The buried race of the chariots,  
The ages pass without a trace of mercy,  
On and on it goes, thousands of deaths or more  
The time has no heart, no hearing  
One leaves to where there is no healing,  
To venture in and leave no more,  
As the blood clots in the burning sands,  
The evening flowers crowd in despair,  
Too suddenly at heart leave,  
Alas, for it was not her,  
The gone is forgotten,  
The present is forgotten,  
Tomorrow remembers forever  
A leaf dances in the movement of the playful wind,  
To drop motionless when it pleases . . . . .

# ROBERT VARGAS

## Blame It on the Reds

### I

Thursday . . . crying . . . St. Peter's church . . . organ  
Incense . . . lagrimas . . . 10:30 morning . . . sun/hot  
Faces . . . old/young . . . Vincent gone  
Anger/love . . . Chente gone now  
Eunuch chronicles plastered with lies  
Reds, Reds melting in American minds  
Brought to you in living color by CBS  
Dial soap and the puppet-coroners  
of the TV world . . .  
("Reds will make you dead," they squeal)  
And the priest lites another candle/

### II

Tears (*saladas*) . . . dry lips  
Black hearse yawns/swallows  
18 years of Chente . . . gone  
Not killed in Cambodia . . . but war  
(*Padre nuestro que esta en los . . .*)  
Walking now . . . the last 24th st.  
Business as usual . . . slower  
Hundreds of sisters/brothers  
Following behind/in you

---

*lagrimas*: tears

*Chente (gone now)*: probably  
*chente* means people here

*saladas*: salty ones

*Padre nuestro que esta en los . . .*:  
our father who art in . . .

Angered in love walking  
 past walls of cornucopia  
 Solid-lined by Pig-nalgas  
 7-up signs gleaming  
 Sears . . . Bank of America  
 Old Glory still . . . stop/go  
 Madre/Hija/Esposa . . . crying  
 Llantos . . . stop/go  
 Chente en el medio de mayo  
 Gone!  
 And the priest raises the chalice  
 ("This is my body This is my blood.")

## III

South Van Ness red light  
 In cars now pollution (F-310)  
 Firestone Rent-a-Limousine stop/go  
 The mechanical centipede slowed  
 by Progress stop/go  
     Business as usual  
 "Hijo, hijo . . . te an asesinado!"  
 I just tapped him across the . . .

---

*Pig-nalgas*: pig-buttocks

*Madre/Hija/Esposa*: mother,  
daughter, wife

*Llantos*: floods of tears, weeping

*Chente en el medio de mayo*:  
people in the middle of May

*Hijo, hijo . . . te an asesinado!*:

Son, son . . . they murdered you!

It seems an overdose of  
business as usual . . . stop/go

## IV

Look back  
Look back Chente . . . si Puedes  
Remember the Roach Pad hunger  
Joys . . . highs, sorrows?  
Mission sidewalks (BART raped)  
Him goodbye pa siempre carnal  
But the genocide trail begins su fin  
Trembling with the weight of our guns . . . /  
Chente is brown and dead  
In the land of E Pluribus Unum  
Dead in the land of the Apollos 13/  
Edsel . . . Titanic . . . U2 and Gary Powers  
Mission Hi . . . State College  
and business as usual/

## V

Now passing local draft board  
Vision of monsoon flies  
bloodsmell cheeks of bronze  
Organisms shell pierced screams of death  
Vietnam! Vietnam!  
Chente dies everywhere  
(Blame the reds!)

---

*si Puedes*: if you can  
*goodbye pa siempre carnal*:  
goodbye forever, brother  
*su fin*: its end

Cambodia . . . brown and 18 . . . Laos

Chente dead in babylon

(Blame the reds!)

En los barrios de Guatemala

San Francisco o Mississippi

(Blame the reds!)

VI

Holy Cross . . . silent in wait

Lagrimas de madre soak black lace

Hijo. Hijo no te vayas

Wife wails ripped/soul fright

alone now . . .

Chente flows into open wound

In earth . . . magic dance of

Mayan ancestors . . . tears

Silent war drums sound

Chente killed by The Guardians

of Enterprise

Then red white and blue

Phallic symbols thrust deep

in our throats . . .

Moist dirt falls . . . covers

Ashes to ashes . . . peace brother

Peace . . . business as usual

"Blame It on Reds!"

---

*En los barrios de Guatemala:*

in the barrios of Guatemala

*Lagrimas de madre:* tears of a mother

*Hijo. Hijo no te vayas:* Son.

Son, don't go.





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# **Eskimo Poems**



## *Introduction*

MADELYN SHULMAN

Eighty centuries past, the first Eskimo hunters followed the giant whale and the walrus across the steppingstone islands we call Big and Little Diomedé. Their descendants range over the northern lands of half the world. Men of the ice fields, they call themselves "Innupiat," Men Preeminent, the original men whom the earth itself bore forth.

Their people live in lands that other men call Siberia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. United by languages, cultures and a history of struggle in a region which yields no favors to its inhabitants, they are divided by lines of politics imposed by men who live to the south.

The songs and poems of the Innupiat reflect the land of midnight summer sun and winter darkness which gave them birth. They hold the optimism and courage of a people who found laughter on the brink of famine. Everyday songs passed the time during the tasks of the household. The hunter's songs reflect the fear, excitement, exultation of the pursuit of game or the lingering dread which struck as the sun receded each fall for its long journey to the south.

Songs reflect the beauty of the bursting-with-life summer arctic, multicolored by wildflowers and moist with the melted snows which the permanently frozen ice just a few feet down keeps close to the surface.

Bursting forth from the many emotions of a life in tune with nature, Eskimo poetry filled a need as great as food and warmth.

"For it is just as necessary for me to sing as it is to breathe," an Eskimo hunter told Danish ethnologist Knud Rasmussen in 1923. "My song is my breath," continued the shaman Orpinalik of the Netailingmiut Eskimo.

"Songs," he added, "are thoughts, sung out with the breath when people are moved by great forces and ordinary speech no longer suffices." }

The men the arctic bred were hunters. They were tied to the animals they sought, as they were tied to each nook and

cranny of the winter-shrouded tundra they called home. The hunter faced the familiar cold with equanimity; he feared the "unlucky hunt," the lack of game, the strange and fatal weather which could cause famine and death among his people. His life trembled on the brink of starvation, yet it was raised and supported to great peaks by the excitement of the hunt and the swift adrenalin rush of triumph at the kill. An inland Eskimo poet sang:

A wonderful occupation  
 Hunting caribou  
 But all too rarely we  
 Excel at it  
 So that we stand  
 Like a high flame  
 Over the plain.

So the songs sing. They sing of the "bubbling food in the pot," the "hard, dearth times" of winter, the hundred myriad joys of living—joyous life even though death may be around a corner or the horrors of starvation and cannibalism only a winter past.

Sung in exultation and mourning, the poetry of the People forms part of a great and detailed oral tradition. There is no native Eskimo written language. Canadian Eskimo syllabic is the creation of a nineteenth-century missionary. The poetry which men like Rasmussen recorded during their journeys to the arctic two generations past stands as a monument to a tradition which today is dying in its clash with technological culture. Of the tens of thousands of Eskimo poets (the word "poet" in Eskimo means "to feel emotion") who did not meet a Rasmussen, we hear only echoes. Their songs, which in Eskimo tradition "belong to their owners," died with them.

The Eskimo people will survive. With the present generation tangled in the social ills of culture shock, a new breed of young Eskimo is emerging. Educated in white men's schools on Dick and Jane, American History and a million details of life in cities and on farms thousands of miles distant, a few young Eskimos are trying to bridge two cultures and live both—often at great personal cost.

"I can only know what is in my heart and spirit, and in the

far reaches of my mind," writes Joseph Senungetuk of his ancestry. While his tradition ties him to the hunt, he can see that way of life dying around him. In many villages only the old people remember the language and legends—prey of anthropologists with tape recorders to preserve a few shreds. Today's hunter uses a snowmobile, rifle and motorboat, and if hunting is "unlucky" he buys canned goods at the village store.

"It was a hard life," writes Fred Bruemmer, who lived with the Canadian Camp Eskimos, "but it possessed the harmony and balance that comes when men are free within themselves, secure within their society, and imbued with a feeling of kinship with all nature."

Glorious was life  
Now I am filled with joy  
For every time a dawn  
Makes white the sky of night  
For every time the sun goes up  
Over the heavens.

Fairbanks, Alaska, September 1972

# JOHN ANGAIK

## My Native Land, the Beautiful

. . . There is a windsong that chants  
a song

From past, present and future;

That chants from chill

to morning cold.

“Come share our land, the beautiful,

Because you find as good no

more.”

# NALUNGIAQ

## Heaven and Hell

And when we die at last  
we really know very little about what happens then.  
But people who dream  
have often seen the dead appear to them  
just as they were in life.  
Therefore we believe life does not end here on earth.

We have heard of three places where men go after  
death:

There is the Land of the Sky, a good place  
where there is no sorrow and fear.  
There have been wise men who went there  
and came back to tell us about it:  
They saw people playing ball, happy people  
who did nothing but laugh and amuse themselves.  
What we see from down here in the form of stars  
are the lighted windows of the villages of the dead  
in the Land of the Sky.

Then there are other worlds of the dead  
underground:

Way down deep is a place just like here  
except on earth you starve  
and down there they live in plenty.  
The caribou graze in great herds  
and there are endless plains  
with juicy berries that are nice to eat.  
Down there too, everything  
is happiness and fun for the dead.

But there is another place, the Land of the Miserable,

right under the surface of the earth we walk on.  
 There go all the lazy men who were poor hunters,  
 and all women who refused to be tattooed,  
 not caring to suffer a little to become beautiful.  
 They had no life in them when they lived  
 so now after death they must squat on their haunches  
 with hanging heads, bad-tempered and silent,  
 and live in hunger and idleness  
 because they wasted their lives.  
 Only when a butterfly comes flying by  
 do they lift their heads  
 (as young birds open pink mouths uselessly after a  
     gnat)  
 and when they snap at it, a puff of dust  
 comes out of their dry throats.

—English version by Edward Field  
 from the translation by Knud Rasmussen

## CLARENCE PICKERNALL

### This Is My Land

This is my land  
 From the time of the first moon  
 Till the time of the last sun  
 It was given to my people.  
 Wha-neh Wha-neh, the great giver  
     of life,  
 Made me out of the earth of this  
     land.  
 He said, "You are the land, and  
     the land is you."  
 I take good care of this land,  
 For I am part of it.  
 I take good care of the animals,



For they are my brothers and  
sisters.  
I take care of the streams and  
rivers,  
For they clean my land.  
I honor Ocean as my father,  
For he gives me food and a  
means to travel.  
Ocean knows everything, for he  
is everywhere.  
Ocean is wise, for he is old.  
Listen to Ocean, for he speaks  
wisdom.  
He sees much and knows more.  
He says, "Take care of my sister,  
Earth,  
She is young, and has little  
wisdom, but much kindness.  
When she smiles, it is  
springtime.  
Scar not her beauty, for she is  
beautiful beyond all things.  
Her face looks eternally upward  
to the beauty of sky and  
stars,  
Where once she lived with her  
father, Sky."  
I am forever grateful for this  
beautiful and bountiful earth.  
God gave it to me.  
This is my land.

# SAMIK

## Hunger

You, stranger, who only see us happy and free of  
care,

If you knew the horrors we often have to live through  
you would understand our love of eating and singing  
and dancing.

There is not one among us  
who hasn't lived through a winter of bad hunting  
when many people starved to death.

We are never surprised to hear  
that someone has died of starvation—we are used to  
it.

And they are not to blame: sickness comes,  
or bad weather ruins hunting,  
as when a blizzard of snow hides the breathing holes.

I once saw a wise old man hang himself  
because he was starving to death  
and preferred to die in his own way.  
But before he died he filled his mouth with seal  
bones,  
for that way he was sure to get plenty of meat  
in the land of the dead.

Once during the winter famine  
a woman gave birth to a child  
while people lay round about her dying of hunger.  
What could the baby want with life here on earth?  
And how could it live when its mother herself  
was dried up with starvation?  
So she strangled it and let it freeze.  
And later on ate it to keep alive—

Then a seal was caught and the famine was over,  
so the mother survived.

But from that time on she was paralysed  
because she had eaten part of herself.

That is what can happen to people.

We have gone through it ourselves  
and know what one may come to, so we do not judge  
them.

And how would anyone who has eaten his fill and is  
well

be able to understand the madness of hunger?

We only know that we all want so much to live!

—English version by Edward Field  
from the translation by Knud Rasmussen

## TUKTU

### Children of Nunamiut

He came out of the wind  
to sit by our fire,  
this man of the land,  
Nunamiut.

He had no pain;  
his words were sad.

He had lost his children  
taken by alien man,  
men from the sun,  
Tannik.

With his back to the high sun  
he sits  
silent now.

For thus they went  
to the high sun.

Following the sound of the juke  
box and new voices,  
Nunamiut's children are gone  
with Tannik.

What is a man  
without children?  
He is Nunamiut,  
and he too will be gone.

The land will be empty  
of man.

Gone the laughter  
across the snow.

Nevermore Nunamiut.

Soon there will be  
only the wind to cry  
for the children  
who are gone.

Listen, children, to the wind.  
It speaks your father's tongue,  
the voice you would not use.

Remember your father  
was Nunamiut.

Only he could live  
with the wind.

Listen, Tannik, to the wind.  
What do you hear?  
What have you done?

Forever across the frozen land  
The wind will cry  
for the children of Nunamiut  
who are gone.

## Igjugarjuk's Song

when I ran over the white fields  
I met the great Musk Ox black  
its hair shining for  
the first time  
grazing on flowers  
far from the hill where I stood  
I was stupid to think  
they were small and thin  
they grew up out of the earth  
when I got closer  
huge black giants  
far from our houses  
in the fields of happy summer hunting  
I thought of shooting them

—*Reexpressed by Stephen Berg*  
*from Knud Rasmussen's Across Arctic America*



what's being skinned

what is big

what is strong

4.

My lamp

he walks around in the way

what are they going to do?

chew the skin of bootsoles

to soften them

soft skin

I wish it would get soft quickly

5.

Name of a man name of a man

who kills bear

the spearhole

here I am trying to drink blood

he pushed him down by the head

and the front of his

inner coat

and the back of his

inner coat

then girl

she isn't sorry

man who sleeps with her

6.

I'm crying I'm able to eat  
I'm working well  
                        when she desires  
her husband or when he isn't angry  
he comes off  
it is enough he has another one  
but not big it is enough he is old it is right  
snow snow hoop of seal skin mouth spear  
knife knife teeth mouth clothes  
  a woman's hip  
  muscles

7.

My mother in Padli  
  in the beyond  
I am born my mother  
because I'm in fat  
  because she deserves thanks  
it is breaking  
                                his neck  
  he chews it

8.

The man does he have land  
  another one?  
it may be so  
he wants me to sleep outside  
I'm sleeping I'm getting up early in the morning  
as soon as he comes



he is  
 giving me whiskey  
 Thanks.  
 the man  
     let him have land  
                     let's get going  
 it will be three of us  
 able to depart  
     his one time wife  
 will you kiss me?  
     She gives it  
     he's shivering  
     I won't keep still

9.

It's a dog Yes! I'm looking at him  
 he's snarling  
     get it quickly from below  
                                     I can see it  
 yet his ears  
 he has hanging ears!

10.

Let the man turn to me  
 this is a woman's song  
                     probably  
                                     he's sleeping outside  
 I'm trying to stop freezing  
 he's getting up early  
 thanks

let the man turn to me  
 let him turn let you and I go  
 but your animals  
   your one time wife  
 they are leaving  
   she is pregnant

II.

These  
   the spirits because it is water  
   if I  
 open it what is it?  
 It's this I swallow it because I don't wish to be  
   laughed at  
 because I steer a straight course  
 his ass scratching it because it's bleeding  
 is it still bleeding?  
 are they skinned birds' tails?

12.

And his kayak  
 he's looking at something big  
 name of man do you think I am dark  
   and his kayak  
 name of man thank you thank you  
 my big wife  
   I follow her around  
   only one  
 it's a five dog team  
 a little behind us

a tiny bird

I used to catch it

13.

Out there his front I touch it

that which is nothing

this We

out there we are going to the ice

we ate bone

I'm not full

I sweep the floor the cooking stove the possessions  
outside

he's piling more on the sled

I kill a square flippered seal

the cooking place

I call loud

if I divide it it is enough the  
possessions outside

is that it?

14.

Give it to me name of the baby

some deer fat

they are coming

some deer marrow

they are coming

only his big mouth

this one fat from the stomach of the animal

frozen land

now it's cold weather now he is shiny

I'm near the camp I'll warm you shall I carry it  
 he's showing me

sound

Wonderful!

15.

Ursa Minor Ursa Minor where are they going?  
 where are they going?

not long until it is light not long until daylight  
 he troubles the dawn

he goes up to my house to my own house

I'm in my house

here two people not long ago

they have been away babytalk babytalk

the lake has many turds

birdshit wet ones

he is climbing on the hills

the elbow bone the blubber don't you see it?

No!

I see it why aren't you inside them

put your sleeves on put on your cap

have a big belly like a dead seal floating

rotten rotten

the hole

(a Blackhead Island Eskimo here with me today)

16.

wallpaper covers the tent the small tent

alive sounding

my knife a woman

speaking

my knife a man speaking

the beaded front of a woman's only jacket  
sounding

they hunt the square flipper seal and the whale  
not quite night and lonely and his daughter  
many young inhabitants of a place called

he is eating  
me  
his sleeping  
boy  
he's an old  
man

he is not afraid we are afraid  
the young woman because she sleeps slept with a  
man

17.

Sounding  
she cuts it  
now he wishes  
I would like to fill her  
now  
I have nothing to do  
I can't feel anything  
he hooks it  
in his hole  
now  
sounding  
now  
I have nothing to do

—English version by Stephen Berg Collected by Franz Boas

# ANONYMOUS

## Men's Impotence

Perhaps—well

It may not matter!

Perhaps—well.

I sing merely of him,

“the boiling one,”

Who sat, fearful, his mouth fast closed,

Among women.

Perhaps—well

It may not matter!

Perhaps—well.

I sing merely of him,

“caribou stomach,”

Who sat, fearful, his mouth fast closed,

Among women.

His two eyes ill-boding

Bent like a horn

To be cut into fish-spears!

Perhaps—well

It may not matter!

Perhaps—well.

I sing merely of him,

“the axe,”

Who sat, fearful, his mouth fast closed,

Far, far away from man,

In solitude.

Perhaps—well

It may not matter!

Perhaps—well.  
My tongue merely joins words  
Into a little song  
A little mouth,  
Curling downwards at the corners,  
Like a bent twig  
For a kayak rib.

—*English version by Edmund Carpenter*

## ANONYMOUS

### Who Comes?

Who comes?  
Is it the house of death approaching?  
Away!  
Or I will harness you to my team.

—*English version by Edmund Carpenter*

## ANONYMOUS

### The Dead Hunter Speaks Through the Voice of a Shaman

To be beyond you now, to feel  
joy burning inside me when the sun  
burns thru the terrible sky  
To feel joy in the new sun, aie!  
in the sky's curved belly

But restless more likely, restless  
These flies swarm around me, dropping  
eggs in the rotting collarbone,  
into my eyes, their cold mouths moving  
I choke on such horrors

& remembering the last fear, I remember  
a dark rim of ocean, remembering  
the last fear, the broken boat drifting,  
drawing me into that darkness, aie!  
Now the other side holds me

& I remember men's fear in the boats  
I see the snow forced into my door, fear's  
shadow over the hut, while my body  
hung in the air, the door hidden, aie!  
When I cried in fear of the snow

Horror stuck in my throat, the hut  
walled me in, slowly the ice-floe broke



Horror choked me, the thin sky  
 quivered with sound, the voice  
 of the dark ice cracking, cold mornings

—*English version by Jerome Rothenberg*

## ANONYMOUS

### The Song of Kuk-Ook, The Bad Boy

This is the song of Kuk-Ook, the bad boy,  
 Imakayah—hayah,  
 Imakayah—hah—hayah.  
 I am going to run away from home, hayah,  
 In a great big boat, hayah,  
 To hunt for a sweet little girl, hayah:  
 I shall get her some beads, hayah:  
 The kind that look like boiled ones, hayah:  
 Then, after a while, hayah,  
 I shall come back home, hayah,  
 I shall call all my relations together, hayah,  
 And shall give them all a good thrashing, hayah,  
 I shall marry two girls at once, hayah,  
 One of the sweet little darlings, hayah,  
 I shall dress in spotted sealskins, hayah, and the other  
 dear little pet, hayah,  
 Shall wear skins of the hooded seal only, hayah.

—*English version by Heinrich Rink*

## ANONYMOUS

### Dead Man's Song Dreamed by One Who Is Alive

I'm so happy  
when it's dawn  
up over the sky,  
I'm so happy  
when the sun crawls  
up over the sky.

Without this  
I'd be so scared I couldn't eat,  
I'd see maggots  
eat their way in  
at the bottom of my collarbone  
and in my eyes.

Here I am, remembering  
how choked with fear I was  
when they buried me  
in a snow hut out on the lake.

When the last block of snow  
was pushed in I couldn't see  
how my soul could fly  
to the land of hunting.

The doorblock worried me  
and I shit  
when the fresh-water ice split in the cold  
and the frost-crack grew, thundering  
up over the sky.

Life was a glory  
 in winter  
 but did it make me happy?  
 No! I was always anxious  
 to get seal-skins and kamik skins.

I'm so happy now  
 every time dawn  
 stains the night sky white,  
 every time the sun rolls up  
 over the heavens.

—English version by Stephen Berg

## ANONYMOUS

### In What Shape?

In what shape  
 Shall I wait at the breathing-hole?  
 In the skin of a fox  
 Will I wait at the breathing-hole!  
 In the skin of "the leaper"  
 Will I wait at the breathing-hole!  
 In the form of a wolf  
 Will I wait at the breathing-hole!  
 What do I want at the breathing-hole?  
 To catch seals!

—English version by Knud Rasmussen

## ANONYMOUS

### a woman's song about men

first I lowered my head  
and for a start I stared at the ground  
for a second I couldn't say anything  
but now that they're gone  
I raise my head I look straight ahead I can answer  
They say I stole a man  
the husband of one of my aunts  
they say I took him for a husband of my own  
lies  
fairy tales  
slander  
It was him, he  
lay down next to me  
But they're men  
which is why they lie  
that's the reason  
and it's my hard luck

*—English version by Armand Schwerner*

## ANONYMOUS

### the old man's song, about his wife

husband and wife we loved each other then  
we do now  
there was a time  
each found the other  
beautiful

but a few days ago maybe yesterday  
she saw in the black lake water  
a sickening face  
a wracked old woman face  
wrinkled full of spots

I saw it she says  
that shape in the water  
the spirit of the water  
wrinkled and spotted

and who'd seen that face before  
wrinkled, full of spots?  
wasn't it me  
and isn't it me now  
when I look at you?

*—English version by Armand Schwerner*

## ANONYMOUS

### spring fjord

I was out in my kayak  
I was out at sea in it  
I was paddling  
very gently in the fjord Ammassivik  
there was ice in the water  
and on the water a petrel  
turned his head this way that way  
didn't see me paddling  
Suddenly nothing but his tail  
then nothing  
He plunged but not for me:  
huge head upon the water  
great hairy seal  
giant head with giant eyes, moustache  
all shining and dripping  
and the seal came gently toward me  
Why didn't I harpoon him?  
was I sorry for him?  
was it the day, the spring day, the seal  
playing in the sun  
like me?

—*English version by Armand Schwerner*

# ANONYMOUS

## the choice

while she was berrying  
she bore that child  
laid it on grass  
and berried some more  
she came back, creeping

she came back, creeping  
and sprang forward  
screaming  
to terrify that child  
then she left

she came back, creeping  
and did those things again  
once twice three times  
the fourth time the child  
changed it was a bird  
flew away

*—English version by Armand Schwerner*

## ANONYMOUS

### dream

I dreamt about you last night  
you were walking on the pebbles of the beach  
with me

I dreamt about you  
as if I had awakened

I followed you  
beautiful

as a young seal

I wanted you like a hunter  
lusting after a very young seal  
who plunges in, feeling pursued.

That's how it was  
for me.

*—English version by Armand Schwerner*



## ANONYMOUS

### Utahania's Impeachment\*

Something was whispered  
Of man and wife  
Who could not agree.  
And what was it all about?  
A wife who in rightful anger  
Tore her husband's furs across,  
Took their canoe  
And rowed away with her son.  
Ay—ay, all who listen,  
What do you think of him,  
Poor sort of man?  
Is he to be envied,  
Who is great in his anger  
But faint in strength,  
Blubbering helplessly  
Properly chastised?  
Though it was he who foolishly proud  
Started the quarrel with stupid words.

—*English version by Knud Rasmussen*

\* Utahania impeached one Kanaijuaq, who had quarreled with his wife and attempted to desert her, leaving her to her fate out in the wilds; the woman, however, had proved not only able to stand up for herself in a rough-and-tumble, but left her husband of her own accord and went to shift for herself, taking her son with her.

# ANONYMOUS

spider

alone  
in the sky  
she and her son

great hunter  
he killed  
reindeer  
they kept the sinew  
for a long rope

alone  
in the sky  
she sewed him up  
in a skin  
alone  
in the sky

she let him down  
the sinew rope  
he became a spider

*—English version by Armand Schwerner*

# ANONYMOUS

## Travel Song

Leaving the white bear behind in his realm of sea-ice  
we set off for our winter hunting grounds on the  
inland bays.

This is the route we took:

First we made our way across dangerous Dead-man's  
Gulch

and then crossed High-in-the-sky Mountain.

Circling Crooked Lake

we followed the course of the river over the flatlands  
beyond

where the sleds sank in deep snow up the cross slats.

It was sweaty work, I tell you,  
helping the dogs.

You think I even had a small fish  
or a piece of musk-ox meat to chew on?

Don't make me laugh: I didn't have a shred on me.

The journey went on and on.

It was exhausting, pushing the sled along the lakes  
around one island and over another,  
mushing, mushing.

When we passed the island called Big Pot  
we spit at it

just to do something different for a change.

Then after Stony Island

we crossed over Water Sound at the narrows,  
touching on the two islands like crooked eyes  
that we call naturally, Cross-Eyed Islands,  
and arrived at Seal Bay, where we camped,

and settled down to a winter season  
of hunting at the breathing holes  
for the delicious small blubber beasts.

Such is our life,  
the life of hunters  
migrating with the season.

*—English version by Edward Field  
from the translation by Knud Rasmussen*

## ANONYMOUS

### song of the old woman

all these heads these ears these eyes  
around me  
how long will ears hear me?  
and those eyes how long  
will they look at me?  
when these ears won't hear me any more  
when these eyes turn aside from my eyes  
I'll eat no more raw liver with fat  
and those eyes won't see me any more  
and my hair my hair will have disappeared

*—English version by Armand Schwerner*

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# **Hawaiian Poems**

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## *Introduction: The Hawaiian Oral Tradition*

Hawaii (formerly the Sandwich Islands) was annexed by the United States in 1898 and became a state in 1959. About fifteen percent of the 650,000 population is partly Polynesian, while fewer than one thousand are pure-blooded Polynesians.

The California poet Michael Nicholas, who studied in Hawaii, says that as far as contemporary poetry goes Hawaii is just like any other state. But among the fifty states Hawaii does have a cultural background that is unique: a vigorous oral tradition of song, poetry, folk tales and stories that dates back hundreds of years. This material was not collected and written down until the nineteenth century. Today it is virtually unknown except to specialists in the field. With two exceptions, our Hawaiian selections have been taken from this ancient material.

The following brief account of the ancient poetry was given in a lecture by Mrs. Kzwaka Pukui, outstanding authority on Hawaiian literature:

“Hawaiians were lovers of poetry and keen observers of nature. Every phase of nature was noted, and expressions of love and observation were woven into poems of praise, of satire, of resentment, and of celebration for any occasion that might arise. These poems, or meles, were not recited but chanted.

“There are many interesting characteristics of Hawaiian poetry. Hula poems had lines of uniform length, but the *oli* poems vary considerably in length in different parts of the poem. This unevenness did not destroy the rhythm or the smoothness of the flow, because there never was any attempt at rhyming at the ends of lines. King Kalakauas was the only Hawaiian to attempt a poem with rhyming words.

“The poets of old Hawaii were skilled in the use of words. Carelessness in the choice of words was believed to result in death for the composer or the person for whom it was composed. Words and word combinations were studied to see whether they were suspicious or not; and in that there were

always two things to consider, the literal meaning and the *kaona* or inner meaning. The literal meaning is like the body and the *kaona* is like the spirit of the poem.

“The poets of old Hawaii were skilled prosodists. Many poems did not hold to one thought alone. Two lines might be about a ship, the next two about a bird on a tree. Such sudden and apparently fickle changes in thought might sound peculiar or jerky to a European, but to a Hawaiian it was perfectly comprehensible because the *kaona* told the consecutive story. Persons were sometimes referred to as rains, winds, ferns, and so on. A person might be referred to in the same poem as rain in one piece and as a flower in another.

“The *kaona* of a chant was believed to be potent enough to bring lovers together, to mend broken homes, or break up an undesirable union. But it was ineffective unless chanted before a gathering of people, and so the composer looked for such an opportunity. Birthday celebrations were especially liked for the debut of a poem. *Meles* were composed for almost every and any occasion and for every emotion—love, hatred, jealousy, admiration, or woe.

“From birth to death *meles* were composed for the *alii* or nobility. When a visitor came, *meles* were composed; if his leis or garlands were beautiful, they were sung about; if he were fond of surfing, that was a theme for a *mele*; and if he liked to travel by canoe, that, too, was sung about.

“Chants ‘belonged’ to the person or family of the person to whom they were dedicated or for whom they had been composed. Others were not allowed to use them except to repeat them in honor of the owner. In order to preserve chants, however, it was necessary to take some old chants belonging to a person long dead and revise and rededicate them to living persons in the family.

“There were different styles of chanting, called the *oli*, the *kepakepa*, the *hoaeao*, and others.

“The *oli* was used for prayers, prophecies, dirges, and chants not intended for dancing. The melodies consisted only of two or three notes, and were usually chanted in a monotone. Occasionally there was a slight change of pitch. The *kepakepa* differs from the *oli* in the prolonging of the end of each line. It is a form much used in love chants. The *mele hula* or *hula* chants were used for dancing and ranged over several notes,



in contrast to the chanting in other *meles*. The old Hawaiian music was more rhythmic than melodious."

A. Grove Day writes about "The Kumulipo," from which we have selected several passages:

"It is a sacred creation chant and a genealogy of one of the great *alii* families, traced from the beginning of the world. An authentic primitive poem of more than two thousand lines, it was carried in memory from one generation of court reciters to another.

"Pagan though they were by Christian standards, the Hawaiian Polynesians were as powerful and godly a people as ever existed, constantly in touch with divine beings. But instead of venerating one omniscient god, they worshiped four principal deities and countless minor ones. There was a different god for every phase of activity, for every form of life, for every individual. The gods populated the earth, the sky, the sea, the underground—fish gods, household gods, gods of war and gods of sports, of planting and harvest, of hula dancing, and tapa beating, of vegetation and volcanoes, of major gods, less important gods, and demigods, with galaxies of hobgoblins, guardian angels, ghouls and ogres to fill all gaps in the natural and supernatural world.

"Hawaiian reckoning went only to 400,000, so the priests acknowledged allegiance to 400,000 gods, but that was an underestimate, for there were many more gods than people, and no god-fearing individual would undertake any action of consequence without first consulting some divinity.

"In the 1860's, before this idolatry had entirely passed from memory, Abraham Fornander (1812-1887), a Swede who had settled in Hawaii in 1842, began to make a collection of ancient Hawaiian tales. His marriage to an island princess and his employment in a number of government positions, including a circuit judgeship on Maui, gave him trusted access to all levels of society. With the assistance of several respected Hawaiians, who did most of the actual collecting and recording, over a period of twenty years he assembled a mass of manuscript which was eventually published as *The Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore*."

Our selections are taken from this collection.

✓ Dirge\*

I make this dirge for you Miss Mary Binning I miss  
you  
o my daughter the wind of Na'alenu used to scatter  
the dust in our house  
o my daughter at the Lau-hu cliff  
I'm crying for missing you and let it be; I love you I  
see us  
o my daughter at the cold Ka-puna spring our water,  
in the rain  
that the Ha'ao hill undergoes  
up the trail almost nobody knew, us alone o my  
daughter  
I'm missing you my life turns  
a shade grayer forever  
it's over now, you on your road endlessly who use to  
shine so my darling,  
now in the one direction, away, me still in these  
places,  
on a walk, up a hill, next to the spring dampening  
me, bent  
from this stone yearning  
o precious  
as pearls, in Waikapuna the sun warmed you I didn't  
know you  
from the flowers

\* Composed by Mrs. Mary K. Pukui's mother after the death of her infant. Reexpressed by Armand Schwerner.

For Ha'Alo'U

I call to the woman moving in the fog  
The fog of Pu'u'ohu creeping quietly down onto  
La'ela'e

The sacred hill of the chiefs of Waimea  
Serene are the upper parts of Hoku'ula  
The higher regions of Kilauea lie spread out  
Pu'u Kapu remains in calmness  
Sacred is this hill until the single birth in the  
blood-red rain

Red, red is the water of Waimea  
Like blood vessels flowing down  
From the uplands of Kohokohau and Haumea  
Some Spanish blood has the wandering lady  
In the Kipu'upu'u rain nipping sharply the skin  
Of the woman for whom is the chiefly land  
Koaka'iniki

Koali'ula is for the last resident of Naihe'auhau  
Swim in the waters of Wai'auia  
At Waiaka the meeting with the waters of 'A'ali'i  
Reach the rise of Lauhuluali'i  
At Ahuli, turn and come back with a wreath  
An adornment of young palai fern in the reddish  
tinged hair

Vapors of mist wisp gently from above Ouli  
The rainbow appears for you woman  
Answer oh beloved guardian of the royal secret cave  
Love with the delicate overflowing water of Waihaka  
The water spreading over the cherished land  
Filling the heart to the brim  
Answer oh one who bends over the sovereign  
acknowledging sea of Kahiki

## The Water of Kane

I want to know  
where the water of Kane is.  
Tell me, is it at  
the eastern gate  
where the sun floats up,  
at Haehae?

*Yes, that's where it is.*

Is it in clouds resting  
on the skin of the ocean,  
in the mountains,  
the valleys,  
under heavy rains,  
in mist,  
in the holy cloud of the Gods stained black?  
Where is it?

I want to know, tell me if it's  
in the deep springs of earth,  
in the magic powerful water  
of life,  
in clouds shaped like everything on earth,  
on the huge breast of the ocean.

Is it?

*Yes, that's where it is.*

You have to tell me!

Life! O Give us this life!

*—English version by Stephen Berg  
from the translation by N. B. Emerson*

## The Kumulipo\*

At a time when the earth became hot  
At the time when the heavens turned about  
At the time when the sun was darkened  
To cause the moon to shine  
The time of the rise of the Pleiades,  
The slime, this was the source of the earth  
The source of the night that made night  
The intense darkness, the deep darkness  
Darkness of the sun, darkness of the night  
    Nothing but night.

The night gave birth  
Born was Kumulipo in the night, a male  
Born was Po'ele in the night, a female  
Born was the coral polyp, born was the coral,  
    came forth  
Born was the grub that digs and heaps up the  
    earth, came forth  
Born was his child an earthworm, came forth

\* *Kumulipo* is a sacred creation chant and a genealogy of one of the great *Alii* families, traced from the beginning of the world. An authentic primitive poem of more than two thousand lines, it was carried in memory by one generation of court reciters to another.

Our selection comprises the opening stanzas and a refrain. It is from a modern translation, with an analytical commentary by Martha Warren Beckwith. As read literally, it "seems to picture the rising of the land out of the fathomless depths of the ocean. Along its shores the lower forms of life begin to gather, and these are arranged as births from parent to child." Like most Hawaiian poetry, however, it has meanings hidden in symbolic language; and essentially "it is a birth chant, and procreation is its theme."—A. Grove Day

Born was the starfish, his child the small starfish  
came forth

Born was the sea cucumber, his child the small  
sea cucumber came forth

Born was the sea urchin, the sea urchin tribe  
Born was the short-spiked sea urchin, came forth  
Born was the smooth sea urchin, his child the  
long-spiked came forth

Born was the ring-shaped sea urchin, his child  
the thin-spiked came forth

Born was the barnacle, his child the pearl oyster  
came forth

Born was the mother-of-pearl, his child the oyster  
came forth

Born was the mussel, his child the hermit crab  
came forth

Born was the big limpet, his child the small  
limpet came forth

Born was the cowry, his child the small cowry  
came forth

Born was the naka shellfish, the rock oyster his  
child came forth

Born was the drupa shellfish, his child the bitter  
white shellfish came forth

Born was the conch shell, his child the small  
conch shell came forth

Born was the nerita shellfish, the sand-burrowing  
shellfish his child came forth

Born was the fresh-water shellfish, his child the  
small fresh-water shellfish came forth

Born was man for the narrow stream, the woman  
for the broad stream

Born was the ekaha moss living in the sea  
Guarded by the ekahakaha fern living on land  
Darkness slips into light

Earth and water are the food of the plant

The god enters, man cannot enter  
 Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad  
 stream  
 Born was the tough sea-grass living in the sea  
 Guarded by the tough land-grass living on land

## REFRAIN

Man for the narrow stream, woman for the broad  
 stream  
 Born was the hairy seaweed living in the sea  
 Guarded by the hairy pandanus vine living on land  
 Darkness slips into light  
 Earth and water are the food of the plant  
 The god enters, the man cannot enter

The man with the water gourd, he is a god  
 Water that causes the withered vine to flourish  
 Causes the plant top to develop freely  
 Multiplying in the passing time  
 The long night slips along  
 Fruitful, very fruitful  
 Spreading here, spreading there  
 Spreading this way, spreading that way  
 Propping up earth, holding up the sky  
 The time passes, this night of Kumulipo  
 Still it is night

—English version by Martha Warren Beckwith

**The Night-Digger**  
[*from* The Kumulipo]

The time arrives for Po-kanokano  
To increase the progeny of Po-lalo-uli  
Dark is the skin of the new generation  
Black is the skin of the beloved Po-lalo-uli  
Who sleeps as a wife to the Night-digger  
The beaked nose that digs the earth is erected  
Let it dig at the land, increase it, heap it up  
Walling it up at the back  
Walling it up in front  
The pig child is born  
Lodges inland in the bush.  
Cultivates the water taro patches of Lo'iloa  
Tenfold is the increase of the island  
Tenfold the increase of the land  
The land where the Night-digger dwelt  
Long is the line of his ancestry  
The ancient line of the pig of chief blood  
The pig of highest rank born in the time  
The time when the Night-digger lived  
And slept with Po-lalo-uli  
The night gave birth  
Born were the peaked-heads, they were clumsy ones  
Born were the flat-heads, they were braggarts  
Born were the angular-heads, they were esteemed  
Born were the fair-haired, they were strangers  
Born were the blonds, their skin was white  
Born were those with retreating foreheads, they were  
bushy-haired  
Born were the blunt-heads, their heads were round  
Born were the dark-heads, they were dark



Born were the common class, they were unsettled  
 Born were the working class, they were workers  
 Born were the favorites, they were courted  
 Born were the slave class, and wild was their nature  
 Born were the cropped-haired, they were the picked  
 men

Born were the song chanters, they were indolent  
 Born were the big bellies, big eaters were they  
 Born were the timid ones, bashful were they  
 Born were the messengers, they were sent here and  
 there

Born were the slothful, they were lazy  
 Born were the stingy, they were sour  
 Born were the puny, they were feeble ones  
 Born were the thickset, they were stalwart  
 Born were the broad-chested, broad was their badge  
 in battle

Born were the family men, they were home lovers  
 Born were the mixed breeds, they had no fixed line of  
 descent

Born were the lousy-headed, they were lice infested  
 Born were the war leaders, men followed after them  
 Born were the high chiefs, they were ruddy  
 Born were the stragglers, they were dispersed  
 Scattered here and there

The children of Lo'iloa multiplied  
 The virgin land sprang into bloom  
 The gourd of desire was loosened  
 With desire to extend the family line  
 To carry on the fruit of Oma's descents,  
 The generations from the Night-digger  
 In that period of the past  
 Still it is night

—English version by Martha Warren Beckwith

*from a chant to Kualii*

no comparison, no comparison

impossible

o could I say no I could not say you're like

the crooked naio, bastard sandalwood

or the thick garland of the motherless ahihi flower

white-fringed in Nuuanu

you're not the deep pool trodden by swimmers, not

the fine, the silvergray leafed hinahina, silver-sword,

bending

to lean and then to fall

in the wind

No, Ku, you're not like any of these

or maybe like the great ohia forest woods

these islands' lehua forest wood alone in the ninth

remoteness of the jungle

No, Ku, these are not like you

not the ekaha fern, strange whole-leafed that lies

under my bed-mat for warmth, not

the fragrant ekaha, not the changing olapa leaf

which gives us a blue dye, the olapa bark,

which gives us a blue dye

No, Ku, you're not like any of these

not the rain, kehau, great

vessel of water poured out, bringing

morning land breeze, not the cold Kumomoku

mountain breeze, the cold Leleiwe land breeze

haven't you known, do you know

the mountain breezes that double up your back

that make you sit crooked and cramped at Kaimohala

No, Ku, you're not like any of these, not

the fragrant lipoa sea weed lovely tasting  
 not the red fresh-water crab  
 within the pond  
 upon the top

of Mt. Kaala, not  
 like the kukui trees of Lihue  
 whose rough bark the sun splits  
 as the Awa-root liquor cracks our skin  
 you're not like any of these, Ku  
 not like the fine aalii tree whose leaves cure us  
 not the maile tree who gives us twinings  
 both glossy and fragrant  
 for our happy times together, not like the kokio  
 whose solitary flowers drop wilted, not  
 like these, you're not like any of these Ku,

not porpoise

of the sea-cutting snout at home in the shark's water  
 or the oo, Kaiona bird, ablaze  
 with yellow shock of feathers; or the keen pig,  
 the chief-searcher, who sniffed out Umi the king  
 for the holy Kaoleoku egged on  
 by the rainbow dazzling him to his wonder;  
 haven't you known, do you know  
 that woman on Puukapolei's summit, draped  
 in her yellow cloth, draped in the brilliance  
 crushed from the mao tree flowers, you're not  
 like the wiliwili wood whose seeds  
 compose our bracelets, whose trunk glides, whose  
 body

lithe among the breakers is surf-rider  
 you're not even like the tree called ti, the great  
 giver, its leaves around our baking supper, leaves  
 to carry it out, healing leaves on the pounding  
 brow, leaf cool for the fevered head, gift of the leaf

laced in the fishing-net, necklace of the leaves  
dispelling bad spirits, and gift of the dizzying  
okolehau liquor from its sweet baked root O Ku  
you're not even like the tree called ti.

—English version by Armand Schwerner

### Lamentation for Lahainaluna\*

Love to you Lahainaluna,  
We are the orphans longing to be with you . . .  
You are the kawelu (grass) at  
    the cliff of Nuuanu;  
At Nuuanu, the dividing line of  
    knowledge,  
Seeking for you but never finding you.  
There you are at the Isthmus of Darien,  
Overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.  
O Lahainaluna, I love you.  
You are the sounding twine of the  
    shoemaker;  
You are the sledge hammer of the  
    blacksmith;  
You are the compass of the navigators;  
And the mud-hen singing at midnight.  
I heard a noise while asleep and awoke,  
O Lahainaluna, I love you.  
You were a hunchback among the chiefs;  
You were the consulting companion of the  
    two winds,  
The moae and the haupepee.

\* From certain of her students when they heard they were to leave the Seminary of Lahainaluna because the building was decaying.

They are the originators of the kona,  
 To hide away your love  
 Across to the stormy sea of Cape Horn.  
 O Lahainaluna, I love you;  
 Thou art the misty rain of Lilikoi  
 That is agitating my heart.  
 You have seen Waialeale,  
 You were delighted with the water  
     of Haunu,  
     Lovely Kaala sublime in its beauty,  
 It was the beauty of the land,  
 You are the fragrant flower of Ainahau,  
     that is kissed in all lands.  
 In the midst of people, and the jungle of  
     Africa.  
 I love the lehua blooming on the plain,  
 Satisfied in the sojourn that was blessed  
     by the red rain,  
 Murmuring at Kauehoa.  
 You were a friend in time of trouble at  
     Lahainaluna,  
 Just like the pervading of perfumes  
 Flying over to the calm of Lele.  
 I jumped to embrace you, but could not  
     find you  
 You were at Ieheulāni.  
 Beautiful lies the field of Kaiwiula.  
 O Lahainaluna, I love you.  
 The greatest in the Kingdom of  
     Hawaii nei.

—English version by Abraham Fornander

## the woman who married a caterpillar

Kumuhea the night-caterpillar loves the woman  
with his daylight man-body takes her for wife,  
    handsome  
man huge caterpillar, at night  
gorges on sweet-potato leaves  
Kumuhea huge night-caterpillar  
bloated back home mornings  
soft Kumuhea flabby Kumuhea, through  
him shiftless the wife starves  
Where does he go nights, her father says, Where  
does he go nights, says the hemp string  
his wife fastens to track him where he goes nights;  
after him through brush on his crawl  
the long string snarls, the night-  
caterpillar is strong with anger, tears  
into leaves all around  
    the people cry Kane help us  
        night-caterpillar kills our food, do him in  
        in his hill-cave home, he  
    kills our food  
merciful Kane slices him to bits  
we now call cut-worm cut-worm cut-worm

—English version by Armand Schwerner  
Collected by Mary K. Pukui

## Taunt Song

A warrior replies to his daughter who has asked him to teach her husband a certain stroke with the war-club.

my club-stroke's for me not him,  
  sandpiper  
mincing along the beach, hello wave  
goodby husband  
  banana-tree trunk  
stalwart on a calm day, hello south wind  
goodby husband  
who's the stroke fit for it's fit for your father  
who really occupies space from crown  
to toenail  
  in the south wind  
he stands  
  he also makes it  
fronting the north wind  
  when *he* fails  
he takes the clumped root-earth with him

—English version by Armand Schwerner





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**Puerto Ricans  
in the U.S.A.**

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## *Introduction*

DAVID HERNÁNDEZ

We are thought of as quiet, friendly, simple happy people. We do not riot, go on strike, nor are we studied by agencies and schools and novelists as much as our fellow humanos. Not yet. The blancos visit our island, take pictures of natives with happy white teeth in brown skins and the new Burger King and Kentucky-Fried Chicken franchises. The blancos come back after vacation to show their movies and slides to their friends. Three or four blocks away live the city Puerto Ricans. The blancos think that we have melted into the American-Dream/Rags-to-Riches society, that we have disappeared in the cities. Blanco, I will show you a movie in the everyday life of a Rican that came to Los Estados Unidos/U.S.A. I will show you the American Dream in practice:

I. DREAM: I come down the mountain  
          mud in my feet,  
the trees rustle gently  
          and the sun is warm  
          and I sit outside the store  
where the old men meet  
          and I drink Malta Corona  
          and think of Los Estados.  
Someday I will leave here  
          and life will be better,  
I will not be angry or sad  
          like my friends who write their  
          letters.

2. CHICAGO: When I was little and brown,  
          the sound of the plane stopped.  
          Midway Field was there  
          proud of my white shirt  
          blue shorts

white shoes  
blue socks.  
True Puerto Rican proud.  
Excited by the americans  
and their smiles like the  
coca-cola  
ads nailed to the town's  
walls.

And I was confused and shivered  
when the Chicago /December wind  
hit me.

I was little and brown.

3. DREAM: En Los Estados our son will be a great  
man.

CHICAGO: And he grew up with filth  
and hate for cops and teachers and  
welfare  
and the priest who came for lent-money  
but was never there when he cried.  
little by little  
he died.  
through school he lost his hope and  
dropped out late.

4. DREAM: Our daughter will be a happy and  
dignified seniorita.

CHICAGO: While they talk of violence,  
you just don't feel right.  
hustling your body  
to the businessman,  
showing you his wallet-pictures  
of 2 children, a home, a car and a wife.  
yesterday your neighbor's baby  
got killed playing with a  
knife.

5. DREAM: Everything we've dreamed about will  
come true.

CHICAGO: Look at junkie man!  
peeking one way then the  
other.



with urine-stenched  
stairs,  
and roaches for house  
guests,  
and the virgin mary with extended rosy  
hands  
to bless the home.

8. DREAM: We will be known and respected.

CHICAGO: WHY DO YOU WANT WELFARE?

I am going lame and in the  
factory these three fingers  
were cut off.

DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN? 2.

ARE THEY IN SCHOOL? no.

WE WILL CONTINUE TOMORROW SINCE IT IS  
MY LUNCH HOUR.

I KNOW IT IS YOUR 4TH DAY HERE, BUT YOU  
DID NOT LISTEN

FOR YOUR NUMBER!

My name is Don Carlos  
Angel Valdez.

9. DREAM: Everyone is equal en Los Estados.

CHICAGO: Winter.

The tans are gone.

MINE STAYS.

Two dollars and twenty-eight cents at the  
drug-store

makes one brown.

Me?

I have been

paying  
since my  
arrival.

10. DREAM: We will settle in a neighborhood with  
good stores, good schools,  
good hospitals and big tall churches.

CHICAGO: You come/We go.

We pack our rice and beans,  
our Goodwill furniture

and nelson brothers t.v. set.  
 we pack nando's, nino's, and varella's  
 grocery stores.  
 we pack arroyo's liquor store.  
 we pack our sons and daughters and  
 their special school books  
 for socially-mal-adjusted children.  
 we pack our gang-boppers with hearts  
 and wooden faces  
 and their gym shoes and purple shirts  
 that they wore in "West-Side  
 Story" singing "i just met a girl named  
 Maria,"  
 but maria's in the hospital getting her  
 tubes tied  
 after a miscarriage.  
 we pack our bolitas/numbers man.  
 we pack our flies and politician  
 promises.  
 we pack our store-front pentecostal  
 church.  
 we pack halsted street and the landlord  
 notices telling us to leave  
 to make room for buicks and hip  
 volkswagens.  
 to move out as our shouts fall on  
 ears that sympathize  
 but offer to help us pack.  
 to move again where no one will  
 hear  
feel  
taste or smell us  
 like doña ruperta at lynn brothers  
 funeral parlor.  
 we pack like the first time we came here  
 by plane.

You hold in your hands el corazon y alma/heart and soul of my people. Our poetry. Read what my Rican sisters and brothers have written.

no one knows me,  
i am thin like puerto rican air on the mountains.  
i walk down the street  
and see my people waiting.  
all with wooden faces and boiling-lava feelings in-  
side.  
no one knows me.

Do you still think we should be quiet and friendly and  
colorful? The volcano is erupting.



# JAIME CARRERO

## Neo-Rican Jetliner

Ticket please

*Me recuerda ese señor*

*a Dick Tracy*

*a Trucutú*

*(Alleyoop en inglés)*

*Ahí viene otra vez*

*con el 'no se ponga de pié*

*por favor'*

Fasten your seat belt

*Ahí viene esa señorita*

*con el 'abróchese el cinturón*

*en seguidita please'*

*please' por favor*

*plis*

*plis*

No smoking *señor*

Is this seat taken?

No. Please.

Thank you.

---

This man reminds me of Dick Tracy, of Trucutu (Alleyoop in English)

Here he comes again  
with "Don't stand up, please"

Here comes this young lady  
with "fasten the belt  
right away please"

Are you from over here?  
No Sir from New York  
But you look Puerto Rican.  
I'm not I'm not born in New York  
born in New York

No smoking please  
My name is Raúl.  
From Puerto Rico?  
Jes an'now from Noo Jork.  
Muee bieeen senhor  
Raúl is may name *señor*.  
American— you look American  
blond  
you don't look Puerto Rican:  
Raúl *señor* my name is Raúl.  
R-A-U-L u.u.u.  
Like the U you find in fool?  
Jes. U.U.U. fool.

Fasten your seat belt fasten your seat  
Fasten your fasten fast fast fast  
F-f-f-f-s-s-s--t-t . . . . .

VUELO A

New York the center of the world is big the  
dream my father had when the sugar cane died  
of drought Sir and bad fertilizing Sir did its job  
to force his wings open to search for the greatest  
money on earth the dream my father had.

---

*Vuelo: flight*

## CONVERSACIÓN I

Hey boy

*Le tengo miedo a esa voz.*‘We the people of the United States  
in order to form

Hey boy

*I am scared of that voice with the*

Hey boy

‘a more perfect union,

Hey boy

‘establish justice,

*Me duele esa voz con el*

Hey boy

*Me duele esa voz como un SUR*

Hey boy

‘insure domestic tranquility

*Me duele el color de esa voz**con**el*

Hey boy

and so on

and so on

promote the general welfare,

Hey boy it is it

and so on

## CONVERSATION I

*Le tengo miedo a esa voz:* I'm afraid  
of that voice*Me duele esa voz con el:* I'm hurt by that voice with the  
*como un SUR:* like a south wind*el color de esa voz:* the false sound of that voice

and so on  
'over the land of the free  
*Me duele, me duele esa voz. . .*

. . . . .

Hey boy did you see  
did you see

VUELO B

New York Sir the center of the world gave birth to my little kid sister yeah and you know the doctor said and the nurse said when the other doctor and the other nurse showed up with my kid sister Sir that no other baby was as big Sir as my kid sister Sir was.

CONVERSACIÓN II

My friend is big man  
a new man man Neo-Rican  
a big man man  
Big man, my friend is big  
Neo-Rican  
A Jetliner man  
As big as I can say big car  
big as fire man  
As big as I can say mountain  
as I can say sky  
my friend is big  
big man big  
as the dry season  
as the rain  
big as I say  
my friend is big  
big man big

As big as I can say Manhattan  
 my friend is bigger  
 the size of God  
 The Jetliner  
 Neo-Rican  
 MAN . . .

## VUELO C

New York the center of the world taught me  
 law-stick ball pool the street money man—the  
 wings my father saw but forgot to take when he  
 saw them there man everywhere anyway in the  
 law in the street in the money.

## CONVERSACIÓN III

*La primera vez que la escuché  
 en mi primer viaje  
 me sonó poética  
 esa frase  
 o gráfica  
 algo así*

## CONVERSATION III

---

The first time that I listened to it  
 on my first voyage  
 it sounded poetic to me  
 that sentence  
 or like a drawing  
 something like this

S.O.B.

Yes Raol like *CERVEZA*  
the word to me  
is a girl

Oh Raol you're nuts

.....  
Man you spelled his name bad

.....  
How?

R-A-U-L like fool  
Jes like fool

Ah Raool sounds like fool  
a U like fool

Jes fool U like fool  
U U U fool

VUELO D

New York the center of the world taught me  
law yes Sir the color of the wings my father  
found when he came to forget his land yes Sir  
and decided the wings money can buy were bet-  
ter than the land.

CONVERSACIÓN IV

*A ver mi hermana he venido  
Hace tiempo no la veo*

---

*Cerveza:* beer

CONVERSATION IV

I came to see my sister,  
I haven't seen her for quite some time.

Slow please did you say NANA

*No señora hermana dije hermana*

Sister *dije* sister

That I come to see her

you see?

*La pobre no se levanta*

Is she sick?

*Si señora.*

Is she old?

yes yes *no se puede mover*

I am sorry to hear that.

*podía caminar*

*la última vez que la vi*

Is she sick?

yes yes

Is she old?

yes yes

I'm sorry to hear that

No, madam, sister, I said sister.

The poor woman can't get up.

Yes, ma'm.

She can't move.

She could walk  
the last time I saw her.

LAMENTO 3

This Puerto Rican is silent  
This Puerto Rican is sad to be silent and sad  
I feel something big  
    or low  
    or dark  
    is going on  
    in the back  
    of the mind man.  
This Puerto Rican is silent and sad.  
The color no white man dares to ask.

LAMENTO 2

I was born in New York new blood.  
I was born in New York  
I'm not a Jones Act Puerto Rican.  
yeah?  
I'm a Neo-Rican man      new flash.  
yeah?  
I know what I know no Jones Act man  
yeah?  
.....  
what was that      ?

LAMENTO I

*Hay horas de espalda: sin terminar*  
Jetliner warned—you're high

---

LAMENT I

There are times (hours) which turn their back on you: endlessly



*Hay horas de frente: ahí puestas, tranquilas*

Jetliner cracks

*Hay horas de día: que hay que caminar*

Overshoot—too high

*Hay horas de hombre: volar*

cracks open

*Hay horas . . .*

CRASH            in the dark

LAMENTO O

On the fringe of trouble if you ask

*¿ por qué señor*

*por qué?*

On the fringe of trouble I say

*¿olvida el Jones Act?*

On the fringe of trouble I say.

a chance sir do we have

a chance sir a chance?

We cannot solve your problems I say

On the fringe of trouble again

On the fringe        . . .

There are times (hours) which face you: put here, quiet

There are hours of the daytime: we have to walk

There are hours for man: fly

There are hours . . .

*por qué: why        ¿olvida . . . ?*: are you forgetting?

## VICTOR HERNANDEZ CRUZ

### Afterword

poems are songs. poems cry & laugh.  
a poet is in the world/the world is in the poet. things  
are in the world. rock is hard/you better believe me  
slam a rock against your face. you see.  
where they come from is where the poet was/the  
poet  
was there/or the poem grew out of mind/ but the  
mind of  
the poet is there.

### EXPERIENCE

poets records his life/his love of life.  
his woman is a poem/& what they do together can if  
the  
poet wants be poetry or it's poetry all the time.  
words are what the poet uses/he bounces words to  
sing his feelings.  
in the world the poet goes thru fire & ice.

thru ugly ugly cuts/or beautiful dreams.  
burning yellow bodies is part of present american  
every-  
day life.  
dead indians on t.v. is common.

these are respectable things (situations or perfect  
happenings  
there are poets of these respectable things, they write  
poems about it, how they like to kill people.  
kill being a good four letter word.

poets go in & out of worlds/people are in the world.

met a woman on 72nd street & she is fine.

or saw a picture of dead people.

or the Paxton Brothers put swords thru indian  
woman

with their babies in their arms.

the poet sees&hears the world.& there are many  
worlds.

people live in different worlds (got different bags)  
humans talk/dance & make noise/a poet must make  
poetry out

of that/or make poetry out of his mind/which took  
form from

the world.

words & music travel.

god would not make anything bad or dirty.some  
people

make dirty things happen tho.

i see what's in the world & sing it  
like god.

✓ JOSÉ-ANGEL FIGUEROA

a conversation w/coca cola

i speak now/coca cola

the way a stone is born  
of your tongue of raw meat  
and teeth like tombstone

you roam east side streets

where corner lights speak spanish everyday  
and like picasso/you  
want to become the sole dictionary  
of el barrio's feet/don't you

don't you know

that bodegas feed negritos  
and picante makes the food feel good  
so that your alka-seltzer communions  
won't be necessary to digest  
that yellow latino grease  
which makes rice pegao  
the only confirmation  
and constitution of our land

don't you know

that new york jibaros  
will never give in to herman badil lo's  
dixie peach & plus white toothpaste  
philosophy

---

*negritos*: black boys  
*picante*: hot peppers

*pegao*: sticky  
*jibaros*: peasants

and that jibaritas will never carry  
 their hopes in high heels  
 to become deaf & dumb to the true meaning  
 of their existence  
 in exchange for miss clairol's push-down spray  
 and dead traditions  
 of does she or doesn't she miss subway realities

i speak now/ coca cola  
 the way a stone IS born  
 for the plaster that came crawling down  
 from the tired blemished ceiling from above  
 that loses its vision when night invades  
 the voiceless will of day/woke me up!

woke me up/coca cola  
 and told me that the only life  
 which made sense anymore are those graves  
 that can't speak english  
 and which are kept from crying  
 like pigeons sleeping in the rain

and told me/coca cola  
 that the only sense  
 which made life anymore are those restless  
 streets  
 that get ulcers everyday  
 knowing boriqueños are held in dying tension  
 ever since ajax nixon  
 sent that white knight to clean spik & span's  
 mind  
 from knowing that the red stains

of the sweat and pain of his brown flesh  
was nothing but the ketch-up  
mr heinz left behind before he made you/coca  
cola  
the king of latino's brow

and told me/coca cola  
that latino souls wake up  
like swollen dreams in the middle of the night  
ever since con edison  
raised the rent & the landlords executed the hot  
water  
that was to come back from retirement  
before the month's rent made itself welcomed  
to molested mail boxes  
who couldn't speak spanish or spell latino names  
correctly unless he's called  
tito or chico or mr. spik  
the one with the welfare tribe upstairs

i speak now/coca cola  
knowing that you have suffocated  
the only air left from my flowery-carpeted room  
& that your roaming thru latino streets  
has caused perverted corridors/street alleys  
and tar-smelling roofs to become  
the final playground and cemetery where el  
barrio  
gets babies born with Death Buttons  
pinned to their Life Day nipples  
while parked cars have funeral processions  
for those that get hit by brute winds and  
cold drunken nights every morningday night

but now/coca cola  
i speak the way blood vessels break

and the way saliva can turn to fire  
 for the aging paint of my cracked walls  
 revealed my sleepless eyes the truth:  
 to know that latinos have  
 for too long been succumbed to the religious  
 diarrhea  
 of walter cronkite liberals  
 who wrote the yellow pages of wooden verses of  
 liberty  
 and nursery rhythm jack and jill  
 went-up-the-hill jive to handcuff jibaro's mind

but now/coca cola

i can see like the corner lights  
 that speak spanish everyday  
 and realize why snoopy  
 was always nodding and took his ass to the moon  
 for he knew that unemployment agencies  
 which were now opening on sundays  
 would never stop tropical sons  
 from crying out in the middle of the night:

mami! mami! tengo hambre!  
 tennnnngggoooo o hambre!

I'M HUNGRY!  
 bellyaching every morning to the next  
 from an overdose of suffering

for he knew/coca cola

why barretto kept slapping his mad conga  
 while crying out: de donde vengo?/de donde  
 vengo?

when you made latinos suffer  
from lack of sun & homemade mama/papa skin•  
love  
and rice & beans which made them men  
and baptized their morning naturalness

ah! but his message touched  
the ear drums of my mind  
and told me/coca cola

that la justicia  
is not a yearly xmas gift

## DAVID HERNÁNDEZ

### Señora Medelez

señora medelez chicana  
of  
azteca bones and blood  
in  
your woman body that was/is beautiful  
hard is your  
face from times that were/are  
bad  
and you señora medelez know what hunger is  
and your children also know  
they are older now and you loved  
and cried for them  
that is why



your

face is hard.

and where is joe your oldest son?

married after a year

in jail

so now he's gone and you've

got 5 left after lucy at 15

got pregnant

married came back and

her husband is

in jail at 19.

señora medelez

your eyes are cold and small

your mouth set unmovable like the time you went to

the station for hitting a cop

you said nobody hits my children.

nobody!

the pyramids of aztecas

still are proud

and tall with sands of the desert in

the wind

and sun as

the cactus grows wild

the things

left are strong as the aztecas and

señora medelez the

pyramids are beautiful

like you

when asleep

in the city.

## JESUS LEDESMA, JR.

### Chicago Is a Hell of a Place

In this city  
you are a man at ten.  
You learn to hate.  
You learn to steal,  
cheat lie and run mighty fast.  
Cause someone's always after you.  
In your own block  
it is your world for tea, or maybe some L.S.D.  
Go ask at the corner,  
it's like a discount store  
if you know what I mean.  
Chicago is a hell of a place,  
full of anger and hate,  
the smell of Puerto Rican rum, sweet smell of tea  
coming out of a gangway  
wino sleeping in an alley.  
Pimps singing \$5 dollars  
for a piece of my bitch!  
gangsters walking down the street,  
saying don't get in my way  
or I'll stomp you.  
Hear the police siren and say in your mind,  
who is it this time?  
See a dog shitting on your stairs  
See the wino pissing at your door  
See the pimp pimping his bitch  
See the pusher hustle his stuff  
See the junkie copping his stuff.  
Come and see Chicago,  
    It's a hell of a place.

# JOSÉ LLUBIEN

## City Poem V

Some one wrote a poem  
About a Puerto Rican family  
Every summer they would all  
Eight of them crowd a window  
to the street and city magic

Soft eyes with purple flame  
Red fire burns/pupilas  
flame of spanish/moorish Karma/African (flame)  
Damnation in hell  
on a hummer Puerto Rican faces  
were seen down under in the garment district  
Hombres bad Hombres todos  
Leeching some crumbs off Americano nothingness  
Motherfucking Immigrantes all with a lot of heart  
All machos  
who stole/fought/killed/died dead  
And pinched and fucked virgin white Americanas  
Our skin/our language/our looks latinos  
O beautiful for spacious mountains majesty  
says Animals!  
O José can you see  
from the dawn's early light  
you are an . . .  
Yes  
an Animal!  
without heart

---

*pupilas*: pupils of the eyes      *todos*: all of them

So in anger we animals  
 Chew gillette razor blades  
 and spit red spic blood  
 it runs heavy and deep to the ground  
 without mercy we write our testimony on subway  
 trains

We frighten white Americanos and yell at fat  
 heartless Policías  
 Hate burns the deepest  
 when it is cursed with Blood  
 Ours we cannot swallow/ we spit out  
 our hate runs/wheels and deals on subway tracks  
 forever  
 America we find the beautiful is Ugly  
 it has no heart/no corazón.

In our jungle without trees  
 we ride heavy with our lost dreams  
 we shoot dope/eat dope/watch dope grow  
 within/ one cold dark dying moment  
 frozen in the white veil of deadness  
 eased from fear/ numbed from hunger  
 Resting forever without installment plans  
 That now our beaten bodies rest  
 weary Puerto Rican bones  
 And Fulano-Mengano invites  
 To celebrate the parting of many lives  
 Bembe tonight !  
 Bembe tonight !  
 for the dead respect laughter and music  
 For we the living loved them all.

Heart/ we got big mucho corazón  
 We feel the pain and listen to the music  
 heavy with beat/ beats of life to come

Drum beat heaviest  
 Temba tin  
 tumba tin tan  
 Rumba tan tin  
 bam bam ba  
 cumbamba  
 That our spirits drive away loneliness  
 misery that reminds us every day

## FELIPE LUCIANO

### Spies going to the cooker

Spies going to the cooker  
 never realizing they've  
 been cooked  
 Mind shook, money took  
 And nothing to show for it  
 but raw scars, railroad tracks  
 on swollen arms  
 And abcesses of the mind

Go ahead spic  
 Stick it in your trigger finger  
 You ain't got nothing to lose  
 but your freedom  
 And yo' mama—who wails futilely at  
 the toilet door  
 wants to tear down the whole plumbing structure  
 but can't

cause you still inside  
Shooting up, when you already been shot

You ain't got nothing to lose but your freedom  
Shoot the poison, the smack of your oppressor  
Shoot Pepi, on 8th Ave. pulling a mule cart  
of cheap dresses  
to be sold en la Marqueta

Shoot Mami, sweating like her brown ancestors  
long ago, killed by Columbus and the Church,  
to make that 60.00 in the tombs called factories  
Machines rape your mother everyday and spit her out  
a whore—  
Don't throw dagger stares at men  
who cruelly crunch your  
sister's buttocks between  
slimy fingers

You ain't doing nothing  
to change it spic  
You ain't got nothing to lose  
but your freedom

Shoot up our island  
of Borinquen  
Populated by writhing snakes  
who we nicely call gringos  
Green Go  
Green Go

Green Berets en el Yunque  
Green Marines on Calle del Sol  
Green bills passing from trembling hand  
to callused palms,

And you shoot the poison 'cause you don't  
want to stare at your own ugly reflection—

But it's there spic, hanging off the stoops,  
dripping over on firescapes, in the eyes  
of your hermanito, who wants to be  
like you—when he grows up.

Better get hip—Quit lying and jiving  
and flying like you own something  
Cause you don't own nothing but your chains  
And when the revolution comes  
Very, very soon—You shoot, and I'll shoot  
You shoot and I'll shoot, You shoot and I'll shoot—

And unless you shoot straight  
I'm gonna get you  
Before you get yourself!

## CARMEN MARTINEZ

### ugliness #5

i heard her talking:  
'man, if i had a rainbow . . .

shyly deafness tickled at my head  
i use to kneel too  
and pray with faith  
and then wait . . .  
wait to wake up

wait for the train  
wait for wednesday  
    or him  
    or a chance  
but mainly for a change  
and sometimes . . . just once in a while  
i'd even wait for  
    tomorrow  
    or a poem  
    or simply my next breath  
usually, though i'd wait  
    for what was underneath  
    to commit my special crime  
    to be able to scream LOUD  
but now, i merely wait  
    to fall asleep and forget/

and she continued:

u know what else i/d do with a rainbow . . .

## JULIO ARCÁNGEL MARZÁN

### An American Dream

(for Jose De Diego\*)

I entered the hall where the family of my history  
Waited. They stood to greet me. Offering his hand,  
Charles the Fifth praised me for coming, at his  
    command,  
The gathering was seated. Distant members, each a  
    mystery,

1

\* The late Nationalist poet, famous for his dedication to Puerto Rican Independence.



Introduced themselves. *Rodrigo de Vivar. El Savio.*

Then,

Formalities done, he led me to a room behind a  
curtain

Where, gowned in the red of a great lady, Mother  
Spain

Sat poised, waiting. With her voice, her lyrical blend  
Of East and West, she urged me forward. Warm, her  
small,

Mother's hands, delicately strong, held mine. When  
she asked

If I would leave again, she wept and quickly masked  
Her tears behind a fan. Charles had returned to the  
hall

Where the family danced to a guitar. She heard them  
clap,

And then she knew. I smiled and laid my head upon  
her lap.

## PEDRO PIETRI

### Broken English Dream

We got off

The two engine airplane  
At idelwild airport  
renamed kennedy airport  
Twenty years later:  
with all our furniture  
and personal belongings  
in our back pockets

We followed the sign  
that said welcome to america  
But keep your hands off

the property, follow the green  
Arrogant arrow to confusion  
don't walk don't talk don't think  
Just drink and we will not sentence you to rot in  
prison

So this is America  
land of the free for everyone  
but our family  
So this is america  
where you wake  
up in the morning  
to brush your teeth  
with the home relief  
the leading toothpaste  
operation bootstrap  
promised you you will get  
everytime you buy  
a box of cornflakes on the lay-away plan  
So this is america  
land of the free  
to watch the  
adventures of superman  
on tv if you know  
somebody who owns a set  
that works properly  
So this is america  
discovered by columbus  
in fourteen ninety two  
with captain video  
and lady bird johnson  
the first miss subways  
in the new testament  
So this is america  
where they keep you  
busy singing

en mi casa toman bustelo  
 en mi casa toman bustelo

To the united states we came  
 To learn how to misspell our name  
 To lose the definition of pride  
 To have misfortune on our side  
 To live where rats and roaches roam  
 And sing a house is not a home  
 To be trained to turn on television sets  
 To dream about jobs you will never get  
 To fill out welfare applications  
 To graduate from school without an education  
 To be drafted distorted and destroyed  
 To work fulltime and still be unemployed  
 To wait for income tax returns  
 And stay drunk and lose concern  
 For the heart and soul of our race  
 And the weather that produces our face

To pledge allegiance  
 To the flag  
 of the United states  
 Of installment plans  
 One nation  
 Under discrimination  
 For which it stands  
 And which it falls  
 With poverty injustice  
 And air conditioned  
 Firing squads  
 For everyone who has

The sun on the side  
Of their complexion

Lapiz: Pencil  
Pluma: Pen  
Cocina: Kitchen  
Gallina: Hen

Everyone who learns this  
Will receive a high school equivalency diploma  
A life time supply of employment agencies  
A different bill collector for every day of the week  
The right to vote for the executioner of your choice  
And two hamburgers for thirty five cents in times  
square

## PIRI THOMAS

### A First Night in El Sing Sing Prison

I stand on the hill, on top of the rocks,  
I stand and I look and stare inside,  
And remember, the whole, the mass, the past. . . .  
I see the gray figures, like walking alone,  
The blast of the then, the walking alive,  
I look and remember. . . .

I was there with you once. . . .

I was with you, I search into the building,  
Many years ago break through the walls,  
I see my cell block, my cell, my bunk, my wash bowl,  
my ca-ca bowl,  
I see my grim bars, around and around,  
The long march upward to the dining room mess.

I do not see them playing, I hear only the marching,

The long line, upward climb, a gray . . . a sea gray,  
A mass of thousands of identities, thousands of locks,  
thousands of keys.

Look, I cry, the cells are open—

Wake up . . . I can't, I'm not asleep, I'm dreaming,  
Piri.

Can you hear the clicks of thousands of keys being  
turned?

The soft pad-pad of the back, the man, the turn of  
your back so he'll not see your face.

The gripping of the wash bowl—the dizziness will  
pass

Sit on your bowl . . . crap . . . move your bowels. . . .  
Defecate . . . oh, man, do something, don't just sit  
there.

Make them shadow bars go away,  
Count the bolts on your cell, how big it is . . .  
6 x 9 x 8 . . . who cares?

It could be Grand Central Station, it's too small for  
me.

Smoke a smoke, read a book, plug your ear  
phones . . .

Shut out, drown out, don't listen, don't hear, don't  
look,

Don't let it get to you.

Forget the green dark pressure that pulls you in a  
short while back.

Forget the last hard flung look before your back was  
trapped by a hard flung gate,

Forget your loss of clothes, identity, forget your bug  
killing shaves,

And the spread your cheek inspection, or lift your  
feet, please.

Forget the damp filled cell in the box, no room in  
reception.

Forget the two matches left in the book,  
And three tailor-made smokes.  
Forget your splitting these in half  
And now four matches and still three tailor made  
smokes.

Forget laying on the dingy mattress . . . . .  
And inhaling time and no space.  
Forget the damned filling, the hammering damned  
filling.

As—it roars on you. . . .  
Hard—into your mind.  
You drag your burning cigarette.  
Oh God, here it comes.

Fifteen uptight years. . . . .of this.  
Gee whiz. . . . Hope I make it  
Got to . .  
Got to . .  
Got to . .

## JUAN VILLEGAS

### WSLUM Presents

12 o'clock high or (How to get 15,000 feet off  
the ground without really trying)

fly brother, fly  
so high  
    so so high  
        a city high  
            a rooftop emancipation high

fly brother, fly  
    data-data-data-data-data.

ALTITUDE: 400 rusty fire escapes . . . Roger.

BEARING: 2000 untouched garbage cans by 3000  
definitely touched roaches . . . Roger.

VELOCITY: full speed of a 1972 oldsmobile, with  
four wheel drive, air conditioning,  
stereo component system, avocado  
hood; and built in magnetic, auto-  
matic pay toilet with reusable paper  
. . . Roger.

WIND VELOCITY: cold as hell . . . Roger.

RADAR: no sign of the man . . . Roger.

PRESSURE: uptight, everything's a mother . . .  
Roger for days.

fly brother, fly  
and when the time comes to descend  
to come  
    down  
        to  
            earth,

then it is  
when you shall go to meet  
the important one; el hombre,  
the man, the provider,  
the all knowing, the omnipotent,  
the image of your reflection, the  
MAN FROM GLAD, MAN FROM GLAD,  
ouuouuu, ouuouuuuu!  
he is your sponsor, the producer  
of your plastic melodrama . . .  
aren't you glad you use dial,  
don't you wish *somebody* did?

fly brother, fly

so high

so so high

soar above the lights

of Sodom brother

fly brother, fly.



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**Related Poems  
by White  
and Black  
Americans**



## *Introduction*

CLARENCE MAJOR

What is the difference between the humming of an electric can opener and the humming of an insect in the grass on a hot summer day. What is the difference between the ringing of a telephone and the ringing of a cowbell. Tell me how the music from a turntable differs from the music of a flowing river. Show me the space between a slaveship and a relationship.

What does it mean, that first sound—*da*—we each make.

I do not know the names of the plants growing in various colorful pots in my red window here in Manhattan. I see them and *know* them beyond naming them. *I* could name them and that would probably reinforce what I see when I look at them. To name plants or animals or ideas or situations is to define the world. These plants have different personalities. I already recognize them by their personalities. By their needs. Some need more water than others. Some need more light than others. Some are deep green, others are light green. Some are tough, others are frail. Some can stand the cold of open windows in winter, others become ill. They are each different, even the ones that seem alike are very different.

What and who one is is a social thing that changes the shape of that original *da*. Different cultures, different needs. Yet all the same, so clearly the same. Understand the need to touch and to be touched. Not only the flesh.

Defining the world, it depends on the angle. The unique situation of North America and its many visions has left large spaces between these various visions. Chicanos, Blacks, Eskimos, Indians, Hawaiians, Jews, Puerto Ricans, Italians, Poles, Germans, English, Irish, Welsh, others. Yet there are ways to oversimplify everybody, everything, reduce people and ideas to what can be coerced or ignored or loved. You define the world you want to see. The world you do not want to deal with you define as inferior or nonexistent.

But the eye of the poet is open. His ear hears the thump of his culture, the pulse of his people; and once the skin is peeled away the throbbing arteries are recognized to be those of ev-

erybody, regardless of how they have been previously defined. One has to see—see clearly the place where one is standing, where one moves. Understand who and what one touches.

Some of our North American poets have recognized themselves as part of all life and others have not. Some have seen and continue to see themselves as experts on life rather than part of it. Most white poets fall into this last category. Black American poets, for the most part, while using a language with a white personality, have used and still use their folk and musical roots as sources, beginning points.

I see those plants in the window. The central need is to define what one already knows. Claude Levi-Strauss says a myth, in the classical sense, is a story that aims to show *why* things are as they are. The white poet in North America who recognizes and uses values other than white values, in a sense borrows a Fire and takes it back to his people—in the mainstream. They call him a genius for his originality. The Black American poet who insists on being himself usually has no space, no world ready to accept him. The white or Black poet who knows the ring of a telephone may be able to define his own actions in society, but if he does not also understand the humming of an insect in the grass, there is a whole area of his own experience that remains closed off to him.

Yet for a poet to see and use the Fire of a culture other than his own is the oldest love story around, and since humanity has always felt itself on the brink of total disaster, its need for love stories—as many as possible—will go on forever!

April 4, 1972

## The Battle of Angels

We threw into outer space  
a whole maze of Indian tribes  
with nuclear garbage  
as unwanted satellites

the Omaha Indian sings:

Arise, sun, moon, stars, all of you  
who move in the heavens  
I pray you, hear me: in your midst  
a new life has come.

His song is  
drilling holes in our ears  
hammering its way into the Mountain Speech of  
    Memphis  
our Revelation

The Black Prophet  
ascended twice:  
to meet the sun  
and to meet his death

—remember the kites falling when we were children  
they always looked like dying birds—

In the dark rooms of the  
movie houses the films of Prophecy  
contaminate the audiences. Batman  
Gagarin Superman Martin Luther King  
this is the Battle of Angels.

✓ ROBERT BLY

Anarchists Fainting

You United States, frightened by dreams of  
Guatemala,  
building houses with eight-mile-long wings to  
imprison the Cubans,  
eating a bread made of the sound of sunken buffalo  
bones,  
drinking water turned dark by the shadow of  
Negroes.  
You remember things seen when you were still  
unable to speak—  
white wings lying in a field.  
And when you try to pass a bill,  
long boards fly up, suddenly,  
in Nevada,  
in ghost towns.

You wave your insubstantial foot timidly in the damp  
air.

You long to return to the shell.

Even at the start Chicago was a place where the  
cobblestones  
got up and flew around at night,  
and anarchists fainted as they read the *Decline and  
Fall*.

The ground is soaked with water used to boil dogs.

Your sons dream they have been lost in kinky hair,  
no one can find them,  
neighbors walk shoulder to shoulder for three days.

And your sons are lost in the immense forest.  
 And the harsh deer drop,  
 the businessmen climb into their F-4's  
 the chocks are knocked out,  
 the F-4 shoots off the deck,  
     trailing smoke,  
 dipping as if haunted by the center of the ocean,  
 then pulling up again, as Locke said it would

Our spirit is in the baseball rising into the light

So the crippled ships go out into the deep,  
 sexual orchids fly out to meet the rain,  
     the singer sings from deep in his chest.

Memory stops,  
     black threads string out in the wind,  
 the eyes of the nation go blind.

We look out the window, and the building across  
     suddenly explodes.

Wild horses run through the long hair on the ground  
     floor

Cripple Creek's survivors peer out from an upper  
     story,  
     blood pours from their ears,  
 the Sioux dead sleep all night in the rain troughs on  
     the  
 Treasury Building.

The moonlight crouches over the teenager's body  
     thrown from the car

The weeping child like a fish thrown from a herring  
     block

the black-nosed Avenger leaping off the deck

Women who hear the cry of small animals in their  
furs  
and drive their cars at a hundred miles an hour into  
trees

## MILLEN BRAND

### Behold Beloved

Not only Count Zinzendorf  
proselytized the Indians:  
the Reverend George Michael Weiss, a "Reformed  
pastor,"  
suggested to the Classis of Amsterdam  
that churches be established  
to "win the affections" of the Indians.  
In Seventeen Thirty  
the Reverend John Philip Boehm  
wrote a letter saying that at Oley  
Weiss "celebrated the Lord's Supper  
without previous preparation"  
and "baptized at the same time  
a number of children, among whom  
(as is reported) were also Indian children  
who, as unbelievers,  
go about like wild animals,  
without a knowledge of God or His word."  
The Reverend Weiss persisted  
and in Seventeen Forty-two  
sent painted pictures of the "wild men"  
to Europe, pleading for them.  
He said they were "very interesting."



He said he had talked with them  
 and had baptized many of them  
 "at their request." He expressed surprise  
 that "no sufficient urgency" was felt  
 "for the conversion of these savages."

The Classis next year wrote back  
 encouraging him

"to bring over that waste of wild heathendom."

But some said

the Reverend Weiss's baptisms  
 were "unscriptural actions."

In anger against "the principle of conversion,"

Boehm wrote, "Behold beloved . . .

where did our Lord command this?" As usual,  
 it was impossible to find in Scripture  
 what one did not want to find.

Indians "are imbued with blood  
 knuckle deep." They tear and devour  
 "even as the bear or other wild beasts do."

They are "wrapped up in the fog and misery  
 of their iniquity." One could obviously  
 do nothing for them and in that case,  
 many implied, it was best,  
 since they were in the way, to kill them.

## OLGA CABRAL

### General Custer Enters Hell

*“ . . . this is just like the Indian wars, except that the  
helicopter has replaced the horse.”*

All the flags of hell flying  
    General Custer enters hell  
in good flying weather  
    on an ICBM  
        & wearing  
all his medals of the  
    Battle of Mississippi  
        2 brassballs & a  
        paper hat  
tours hell accompanied by  
    a pack of phobic moons  
& inspects a think-tank  
    where technicians are giving  
        a prisoner of war  
        the water-torture.

Who lies there is neither  
    man nor woman any longer  
        but a country  
barefoot: the same  
    brown/black feet of the  
        shoeless poor  
who have walked centuries down the  
    Andes or along the Ganges  
        everywhere in time's  
        ghettos.

General Custer instantly

recognizes them from photographs  
 of Most Wanted Feet & is  
 rabid  
 to see they have caught the last  
 guerrilla of ages & now  
 pyromaniacs have set fire to  
 the prisoner's eyes & his country  
 will die with his brain.

Still hell is not secure. Somewhere  
 in a secret hideout under hell's vast  
 graveyards the  
 guerrilla of ages has returned  
 disguised as a newborn infant.

## HAYDEN CARRUTH

### At Dawn

At dawn the desert turns to porcelain.  
 Upon a dune-rim stands a skeletal horse,  
 Head down, forehoof cocked, cropping glazed sand.

The stars blanch like goldfish in a frozen pond.  
 A lizard darts from the F-hole of a violin  
 That lies in perfect syntax on the sand.

Sunrays set the horse on fire. Behind  
 A giant cactus a shy Indian screams  
 Century after century in his death pains.

## WILLIAM CHILDRESS

### For an Indian Woman Dead in Childbirth

[written at an archaeological site,  
Dickson Mounds, Illinois]

Death stopped your  
attempt at life, long  
before Columbus came,  
and took you from your  
mud hut to lie in state  
before these gawking  
strangers. Fibers  
of flesh still halo  
the loins that grip  
the tiny warrior  
who would not leave you.  
His thin ivory wrists  
still grope toward  
a life that never came.

I think of the shamans  
whose witchcraft failed  
to unclench your pelvis;  
you could not give  
what would not be given.  
I watch the gaping  
tourists who, with  
Kodaks ready, picture  
your pain; and, mother,  
I am in pain and I  
become your son,  
centuries late  
transcribing  
your passing.

## LEO CONNELLAN

### This Is A Stick-Up

El Welfare Chevito slunk out of his urine stench Casa  
to feed a needle to the fella sitting down on the nerve  
    ends of his bowels  
like some impaled Prime Minister slipping his feet  
    on a greasy pole  
where he can get up off and can't.

Evening just turned dark touched lovely people like  
    you and me  
with soft caressing breezes, but El Welfare Chevito,  
    like a victim of croton oil.  
Crave jabbed murder onto his relief screeching brain.  
    Pastrami gorged Police  
sitting on the wide buttocks of no exercise, waited to  
    get their sex with  
six guns.

And up the avenue innocent victim in the white  
    apron of piety  
that concealed the one eighthworth of Virginia ham  
    he gave you after  
you paid him for half a pound, made the slot man at  
    the Daily Spread Eagle  
his morning headlines for the big shots laying down  
    cents for a copy  
like it was nothing.

It was over in a minute, light flashed on light  
throwing the good guy's glasses off his sneak thief's  
    surprised eyes  
stamped with a gasp muffled by his shoulders hitting  
    groceries

falling all over him like stir crazy cons leaping  
hopelessly nowhere.

But outside, slinking up with their winking whores  
light  
to kill forever the seed of a life, the wide blue  
bottoms  
had El Welfare Chevito blasted into street with so  
many holes in him  
it was hard to get in a last dream of far away Puerto  
Rico.

## JEFFERSON DAVIS

### John Mason Gets Sassacus' Head

John Mason dreams  
at dusk, as fat flies buzz,  
thump the glass pane.  
Starved among summer feedings  
John Mason shuts his eyes . . .

the bombers clock out  
from Connecticut west  
stuffed with dark fiire  
to char wild India  
at last

John Mason dreams  
"to destroy enemy  
sanctuaries."

He wakes  
the head is brought to him  
eyes quenched  
lips quieted with thongs

the head of Sassacus  
and his hands  
cut off lest they reach  
into a dream's shadow  
dark waves of blood  
spilled to feed flies.  
John Mason sleeps

and dreams again . . .  
from his dull eye  
empty locusts of iron  
fall onto dark bodies  
who glow and sow the earth  
till their eyes are broken  
by the iron teeth  
and fire without light  
eats their tongues

John Mason dreams  
this is "pacification"—  
he feels at  
peace  
gut furnaces  
of Texaco crack blood  
to gasoline  
maggot ball bearings  
rip and eat their flesh  
wallow and grow wings  
the bombers land  
again and stalk to rest  
John Mason dreams

he is safe, gorged  
alone, asleep, burrowed

deep in his steel home  
beyond all flies  
eyes lights hands  
tides of blood  
and he dreams  
what he has mastered.

## DOUGLAS FLAHERTY

### Snake Rite

[improvisation on the Zuni  
Indian legend of New Mexico]

The blind beetle  
calls for drink  
We hunters watch  
from the tall grass  
rigid as spears  
The Spider Woman  
winks an evil wink  
All the snakes  
sleep in their rattles  
Beyond the grass  
water surrounds us

The dove sings  
We cast off clothes  
We stand naked  
and ready to drink  
with the snakes  
Fully awake now  
they slither  
& suck our tongues



Like mother milk  
it brings strength  
This makes us glad

Now we drink the  
fluid of spiders  
Come come and drink  
I ya oha e  
The warriors  
find their children  
They crawl in the grass  
Now we are ready  
to bathe them  
Come with reverence  
Come all people

## JOHN GILL

### Something More Ghostly

This is not an unkind land  
upstate New York  
Finger Lakes Region  
where glacial lakes keep their cold  
til mid-July  
and rocky canyons bring the water down  
past great falls and cliffs of shale  
to fill bony fingers:  
Skaneateles, Owasco, Cayuga, Seneca, Canandaigua  
ghostly names still treading the past  
not used—"recreation areas," hopefully, on the map  
where early bright empire cities  
Elmira, Binghamton, Bath,  
Geneva, Watkins Glen, Aurora, Auburn . . .

their Victorian grace and gimcrack gentility  
linger in a faint smell of dust,  
a few streets, or the way the light is sometimes laid  
grey and nostalgic like the heartless past  
of Empire and Sullivan's stolid march and rape  
where even his men, their war-whoops of joy  
less commanding, grew tired of destroying  
such quantities abounding:

tons and acres of corn piled and burnt,  
delightful peach and apple orchards girdled,  
villages wiped out so the savages won't come back.

No adventure left, his raiders saw the land,  
returned to divide and farm and speculate.

"Why, them Indians had fine log houses  
windows filled with something looked like glass.  
Better than what I had back East!"

So we came

where even now we camp on conquered ground  
right off the highway

and something more ghostly rings us in  
a restlessness, a vague fear, a distaste  
as simple as the weather

for this quietly spectacular land

whose ancient people, Seneca, meant "people of  
stone."

The stones remain.

# JOHN HAINES

## The Traveler

### I

Among the quiet people of the frost,  
I remember an Eskimo  
from Holy Cross, walking one evening  
on the road to Fairbanks.

### II

A lamp full of shadows burned  
on the table before us;  
the light came as though from far off  
through the yellow skin of a tent.

### III

Thousands of years passed.  
People were camped on the bank  
of a river, drying fish  
in the sun. Women bent over  
stretched hides, scraping  
in a kind of furry patience.

There were long hunts through  
the wet autumn grass,  
meat piled high in caches—  
a red memory against whiteness.

IV

We were away for a long time.  
The footsteps of a man walking alone  
on the frozen road from Asia  
crunched in the darkness  
and were gone.

**WILLIAM HARMON**

**Adaptation of Nahuatl Lament**

Ha: If I introduce you into the obscure bowels of the  
Temple  
& ask which bones belong to the omnipotent  
Achalchiuhtlanextin,  
first chief of the ancient Toltecs,  
Or of Necaxemítl, devoutest pontifex,  
If I inquire as to the whereabouts of the peerless  
beauty of  
the celebrated empress Xiuhtzal,  
Where nowadays the most pacific Topiltzin, last  
monarch of  
hapless Tulan,  
Or the location of the sacred ashes of Xolotl our first  
father,  
or those of ring-giving Nopal or Tlotzin,  
Or even the still-warm soot of my own father  
Ixtilxochitl  
(glorious, immortal, but quite unhappy &  
altogether lacking in luck),  
& if I continue this catalogue of embarrassing

questions, tabulating  
 the absolute thousands of your illustrious  
 ancestors,

What could you say?

For you don't know, you just don't know:

The dust of the first & the dust of the last are now  
 the clay of everyday,

& it's going to happen to us too in just the same way,  
 & to everybody else, all the people who come after.

## MICHAEL S. HARPER

### Prayer: Mt. Hood and Environs

The windows of America  
 are faceless, incestuous screens  
 pumiced in pure glass,  
 triangular, innocent,  
 wired white hoods  
 cropped in green grass.

Comatose and armed  
 explorers brought salt water  
 from the ocean to boil  
 in three kettles as an offering;

The Indians smoked  
 on the mountain trails  
 in buck heat  
 high along the Columbia;

Lewis and Clark,  
 their slave, York,

took their salt up  
in their webbings;

the meat now cured,  
the lumber stink off  
the river,  
fertilize no soil  
without Indian blood  
or red roses.

## J. C. HOLMAN

### *from Windsinger*

The desert nightwind blows  
sand, lamentation  
wailing, echoes  
or only the howl of a lunatic coyote  
learning that he too  
is the last of his tribe.

Listen professor  
what is survival for a windsinger  
without his people?  
What good is it to know  
the meaning of the stars  
if there is no one to tell?  
In my spider web lodge  
in your suburban badlands  
I tend loneliness . . .

Desert nightwind:  
I am caretaker  
of those sunsets that summoned

the tribe away  
 into the dark dream  
 I pass through the trembling mesquite  
 into those sunsets  
 becoming my own legend.  
 I sing.

## COLETTE INEZ

### Los Quatros Ijadas De Una Palabra

Each word has 4 sides around it  
 north white west blue  
 south green east gold  
 as in the Sioux cosmogony.

Each has direction  
 as a crow veers  
 into my eye's circumference

as a chieftain asks the sun  
 to ride from its cloud.

Cree Zuni Tuscarora Sauk  
 the continual music

of north jay west shrike  
 south crane east gull  
 congruent to the space  
 which moves their call

over north ice west sand  
south loam east stream  
moving the word as it pulses.

When a star appears to be fixed  
but is roiling  
it is a word the one I wanted  
to divulge

as love electrifies  
the circumscribed sky  
in my skull.

## ELIZABETH KONOPACKY

### Indian Tutoring Collage

Lisa, the Winnebago tongue  
could not lick the wounds  
festering from your graveled needs  
your grandmother didn't speak English good  
and your father wasn't a woman  
so one day you went off to grow up mute

Joe, gaunt sparrow pecking winter's crumbing eye  
you preferred the naked numbness  
to borrowed mittens and a foster home  
because you are all you will have  
and you will not give or take  
but die clutching your leeches marrow brown

Dove, your cosmetic veneer imprisoned you  
in chic fan mag and nickel cig glamour  
as you affectedly swiveled your backside



into the grain of your well-grooved bar stool  
but no makeup could harness  
your irises streaking red pine knotholes at midnight

Deanna, life is a round deer, whirlpool  
coursing on nine lobed feet  
and your name is crooked round, too,  
those who envisioned only the rims  
just saw dizzying circular scrawls  
forms out of cornered contexts

Freddy, you only wanted to learn dirty French  
so you could make a dent in the myriad places  
you never stayed in for long  
so you needed a fluid language, Freddy,  
of honky-tonk syllables running aimlessly on  
and never pausing to mean a word

Robin, you are not that timid bird  
but a thunderbird spread flashing  
as hovering, swooping, you descend from "Indian  
land"  
and you drop wet feathers for Redmen alone  
and your headband is a genuine leather thong  
cinched talon pulled tight around

Julie, the pelting and buoyant Ma-oo-na's breath  
swept you along on its hurtlings  
yet your laughter was barefoot prancing in  
rainstorms  
and I wished you dripping may flowers  
but your footsteps were already ringed  
with His august rainbowed eyelids

AL LEE

## The Rage of Jackson

[for Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.]

This man's teeth can chew a pine tree down,  
but not a hickory. His shoulders bulge  
like thunderheads and can lift  
up timber. He can wrestle hogs.  
Look at the teeth, the ham  
of his lips peeled back  
by the lumpy fingers of Andrew Jackson.

Undraftable and still at war  
with America, the Seminoles  
lurk in the secret arms of cypresses  
on our perimeters. Congress!  
How shall we retrieve our niggers?  
By ones and twos into the cuddles  
of resistance, they abscond and we  
are that much deeper in the bogs of credit.  
This man's coarse hair  
will crown our flagpole.  
His face hardens with a Chinese look  
under a slop of skull.

Top Court Rules  
For Cherokees

"John Marshall has made his decision,  
now let him enforce it."

—*Jackson on Worcester v. Georgia*

The people hate a rich man's polished way  
of lounging in his sunroom and digesting  
a million acres with a signature.

We hate the rich, but when we wake  
gaze past the gray horizon and imagine  
some Wilderness Road to easy money.  
Flailing like a cloud of quarterhorses  
westward farther than California,  
we flee the rich, just as the Indians  
flee the fiery mane of Andrew Jackson.

But . . .

The rich had better keep indoors today.  
This is the famous Inauguration:  
our boots are muddy  
and we spit out the wine on damask.  
The President with a shiny knife  
can make the dollar dance Jim Crow  
and break the Biddle bank.

# PHILIP LEGLER

## Campos Santo

You can  
see them off  
the roads, all over  
New Mexico,  
this one  
by the Rio Grande

with names  
common as  
weeds (Sanchez, Chavez,  
Martinez), a  
wooden  
marker and the bright

bouquets  
spring flowers  
blooming in plastic  
wrappers, and a  
knee-high  
fence broken down where

the wind's  
blown through, to  
mark a plot, really  
a piece of earth,  
as if  
in death it was his.

## MERIDEL LE SUEUR

### I Light Your Streets

I am a crazy woman with a painted face  
On the streets of Gallup.

I invite men into my grave  
for a little wine.

I am a painted grave  
Owl woman, hooting for callers in the night.

Black bats over the sun sing to me.

The horned toad sleeps in my thighs.

My grandmothers gave me songs to heal

But the white man buys me cheap without song  
or word.

My dead children appear and I play with them.

Ridge of time in my grief remembering.

Who will claim the ruins?

and the graves?

the corn maiden violated

As the land?

I am a child in my eroded dust.

I remember feathers of the humming bird

and the virgin corn laughing on the cob.

Maize defend me

Prairie wheel around me

I run beneath the guns

and the greedy eye

and hurricanes of white faces knife me.

But like fox and smoke I gleam among the thrushes

And light your streets.

D. A. LEVY

the bells of the Cherokee ponies

i thought they were  
wind chimes  
in the streets at night

with my young eyes  
i looked to the east  
and the distant ringing  
of ghost ponies  
rose from the ground

Ponies Ponies Ponies

i looked to the east  
seeking buddhas to  
justify those bells  
weeping in the darkness

The Underground Horses  
are rising

Cherokee, Delaware, Huron  
we will return your land to you

the young horses  
will return your land to you  
to purify the land  
with their tears

The Underground Horses  
are rising  
to tell their fathers

“In the streets at night  
the bells of Cherokee ponies  
are weeping.”

## DICK LOURIE

### the Indian on the moon

now that we are ready to go ahead  
with another moon shot as they call it  
I saw in the paper that in line with  
a new policy of re-focusing  
some of our government programs for the  
poor the next astronaut to set foot on  
the moon is to be an indian (as  
a group they are reputed to be or to  
have been among the most resourceful of  
our citizens) planting the flag of A  
merica he will set out to explore—  
in that graceful way they seem to have—the  
dry seas of his inheritance: that is  
the second part of the plan—all of the  
other indians are to follow in  
the next capsules we are awarding them  
the whole moon: they will rebuild their ancient  
cultures in the gray dust we will look up  
to see the thousands of indians as  
a spot on the luminous bright disc we  
have loved in the sky: and from now on  
that indian speck on our lovely moon  
will remind us of all our pledges to  
them and now the moon shall be theirs “as  
long as the grass shall grow” there on the moon.

## WALTER LOWENFELS

### At Bemidji Falls

Neither spirit nor hawk—  
that was my voice you heard  
last night by these willows  
calling Wacoba, Wacoba

Yes, this is the secret spring  
the Indians used to visit.  
The woods cover up the sky here;  
it is a sound place to make magic.

The waterfall  
was there when you were asleep.  
Indians used to trap around the bend.  
Yes, that's the wigwam your ancestor  
blew to hell for a dollar and a half.

Neither wind nor wolf  
rustled these willows last night—  
that was my blood you heard  
calling Wacoba, Wacoba

I free myself by association—  
I will be Indian,  
a native of Kooch. Give me your blood,  
give me your copper skin, my fathers,  
get me out of this fix!  
Help! I am drowning, Mother,  
drowning in the blood  
I have spilled over these waterfalls.

That was no ghost that moved  
last night—that was my heart you heard  
under the willows, calling  
Wacoba, Wacoba.



# HOWARD McCORD

## A Day's Journey with Geoffrey Young

### *pictographs*

1) and at the river

a shape traced on a stone  
the cull of a shape  
by a degenerate hand

The Shoshoni no Chichimecs

rude, inglorious, a fish-stink  
heavy as fog.

No castaway Phoenicians, lost navigators  
Shoshoni and brute, illiterate

But they danced and knew  
the orgasm  
and ate every day they could.

2) the road to Billy Meadows  
is hardly there anymore

Buckhorn Creek splits  
and the map doesn't know where anybody is.

The canyon  
so far and lonely and deep  
exactly  
flight  
and the hands of God

Bless us  
keep us safe from harm

3)small campsites

a rabbit femur, some charcoal,  
hardly out of the wind

They called them the "grass-house people"  
and Bonneville found them "wintering in such  
shelters

without roofs, being  
merely  
half circles of brush,  
behind  
which they obtained  
but an imperfect  
protection"

But this is Nez Percé,  
Sahaptin country,  
the Shoshoni far upstream  
with an "imperfect protection"

*the fall*

4)Licentious, vulgar greed

and the white skin of Satan are not new  
and if Viet Nam is unspeakable  
its total antecedent  
is (in this local space)

the Treaty of 1855  
violated by the Treaty of 1863  
(the white shits had found gold in the  
Wallowas)  
and the vicious exile 1877-1904  
of Joseph

Nature's gentleman, the ladies could say

(who would not suffer a black hand inside their  
thighs)

a retreat worthy of Xenophon

“incommoded with women & children”

but the morality of law is power.

5) here the road

breaks off the crest

and we've never got to a single place

and sign said was coming up

The lesson of history, precisely.

As Standing Bear was denied  
writ of habeas corpus because  
he was not a “person within  
the meaning of the law.”

Reversed 18 April 1877

but who believed?

the road forks again

and down the one

we did not take is the Master

(always)

the trees see him ride the sound of his drum  
going where the dead are afraid to go  
prophesying with a spider on his tongue.

on our road: chukar, three does  
a broken trestle rot-green with moss  
a flat tire, a sinister man  
with his bones on top of his skin,  
and coming up, rain.

The magic we have is that we do not believe in  
magic  
and will not retreat.

6)the best thing  
would be to go back to the crest  
camp  
then wait to see what the dawn  
is like from the very top.  
Away from the damned white man  
and the war  
left with just the bones of Indians  
wind  
& the music in your head.

“The exact nature of Indian  
ownership of land  
appears not to have been understood  
by the early settlers, and the  
misunderstanding was the fruitful  
source  
of trouble and even bloodshed.”

There is no way back  
only the disease of our history  
the mutilation of land,  
murder

The Skidi Pawnee gave up a woman to the  
morning star  
about corn-planting time  
but not every year.

One way is the ten o'clock napalm  
 absolute possession  
 a percentage  
 treachery

“General Jessup, maddened by the public cry  
 for more energetic action, seized Osceola  
 and his attendants while holding a conference  
 under a flag of truce”

*beyond*

7)The best thing  
 would be to sit on the ridge  
 wrapped in a Chilkat blanket  
 and watch everything go away.

lies  
 Zyklon-B and C S gas  
 the constabulary of Grenada,  
 Mississippi  
 the torture of children  
 Lidice and My Lai  
 Wounded Knee, Hue,  
 Sand Creek, all  
 of Quang Ngai Province.

8)We have yet to comprehend  
 the pilgrimage of Smohalla, prophet  
 and wanderer of the Sokulk

“he left home secretly  
 and absented himself for a long time”

On foot to Mexico about 1850  
back through Nevada and the spirit land

messages

: : give up the white man : :  
return to trees and stone  
and the Dream.

But he knew this country  
we look at, Geoff,  
and he knew the death that was coming to it  
would never go away.

## THOMAS McGRATH

### *from* Letter to an Imaginary Friend

. . . A step; a half-step, and a step more, I finally  
make it

Over the shallow lip and stand on the low plateau:  
Here's Tommy Comelately to pore over the bones  
Another time.

And what's here—on the little bluff  
Over the little river?

A way station, merely;  
A half-way house for the Indian dead—an alphabetic  
Boneyard . . .

It was here the Sioux had a camp on the long  
trail  
Cutting the loops of the rivers from beyond the  
Missouri and Mandan  
East: toward Big Stone Lake and beyond to the  
Pipestone Quarry.  
The place of peace.

A backwoods road of a trail, no tribal  
Superhighway; for small bands only. Coming and  
going

They pitched camp here a blink of an eye ago.  
It's all gone now—nothing to show for it.

### Skulls

Under the permanent snow of time no wind will lift  
Nor shift . . .

—these drifting bones have entered the rock  
forever . . .

And all done in the wink of an eye! Why my  
grandmother saw them—

And saw the last one perhaps: ascending the little  
river

On the spring high water in a battered canoe.

Stole one of her chickens

(Herself in the ark of the soddy with the rifle cocked  
but not arguing)

Took the stolen bird and disappeared into history.

And my father, a boy at Fort Ransom, saw them each  
spring and fall—

Teepees strung on the fallow field where he herded  
cattle.

Made friends and swapped ponies with a boy his own  
age—

And in the last Indian scare spent a week in the old  
fort:

All the soddies abandoned, then.

Wounded Knee—

The last fight—must have been at that time.

And now

All: finished.

South Dakota has stolen the holy  
Bones of Sitting Bull to make a tourist attraction!

From Indians we learned a toughness and a strength;  
and we gained

A freedom: by taking theirs: but a real freedom: born  
From the wild and open land our grandfathers  
heroically stole.

But we took a wound at Indian hands: a part of our  
soul scabbed over:

We learned the pious and patriotic art of  
extermination

And no uneasy conscience where the man's skin was  
the wrong

Color; or his vowels shaped wrong; or his haircut; or  
his country possessed of

Oil; or holding the wrong place on the map—  
whatever

The master race wants it will find good reasons for  
having . . .



# CLARENCE MAJOR

## Queen Pamunkey

An American  
in drag but hard as British  
morality, in the new  
world they, with honor, delivered  
themselves, this

twenty-year late crown

to a dead woman. Called her Queen  
Anne but her name was chief  
Pamunkey.

Grief. She lost Totopotomoi &  
the warriors & never forgot nor  
forgave. English ends

turned up in the Society for  
the Preservation of Virginia.  
Richmond 1715.

## JOHN R. MILTON

### El Turista en El Pueblo

Blanket-wrapped, they stare at me  
from sun-washed doorways, shaded  
in the permanence of dark  
traditions and cool privacy  
of adobe rooms. Cubed caverns,  
they smell of life and death,  
washed only by the sun and moon  
and permeated briefly by the sage,  
the pine, the baking bread.  
Their blankets hang in stillness  
on shoulders bent but pure;  
passed faces, oiled to brown,  
made poignant in neutrality, turn eyes  
that pierce the fretful stranger  
standing sadly in the rising morning dust.

I wait for recognition  
in the deepening wells of old concern;  
now I have seen the Pueblo,  
breathed new sage and swallowed dust  
chipped slowly in a century's winds;  
now I have walked where earth  
was stirred by a thousand pairs  
of shuffling feet, resigned and wise.  
The ache is mine alone; they heed it not  
but pull the blankets close and turn  
to blend again with darkness, melded  
shadows in the interioered past.

Adobe walls, five times tiered  
to reach the growing sun,

reflect new morning light  
 to strike me full. Blanketless  
 I stand exposed, alone, outside,  
 to think: Fine old traditions  
 don't come cheap these days:

And go.

## ROBERT NELSON MOORE, JR.

### An Offering to the Dawn Princess

At the rebirth of the moon, my father  
 packed leaves around brown trout,  
 put them in the midst of hot stones  
 and spread their ashes in cooling heaps  
 to the great wind spirit.

As the snow left, we traveled through the  
 icy water, moving in the bellies of streams,  
 seeking the white antelope with eyes  
 of pink fire. Finally, far into  
 the country of snakes, we pierced the snowy  
 body of the doe-goddess and held the  
 flesh in gently cupping hands. Her eyes  
 we sealed in leather pouches, holding their power  
 to our loins like great stones.

My father stayed to die by the bones of the true  
 princess of dawn, planting branches in the earth  
 to still its fury at the loss of a virgin daughter.

That was when the spring lay upon me like fur.  
 Now, the mother land lies sleeping under the  
 spreading of my fingers,

Blue-eyed women lie naked, staked before my lodge,  
burying themselves with screams. I have taken  
my pleasure with these daughters of the serpent  
river. Their howls filled the night with pleading.

Soon they will dance with flames, their flesh  
splitting to the tongues of fire gods slowly turning  
them to dreams.

It has come to this: the land of my people, the  
land of fleet-moving beasts, the land of sun,  
has ceased to cast favor on our bodies.  
Our brother the wind no longer breathes his  
steely breath in slow pants upon us as we couple  
by the sacred river.

We burn the women until their flesh blazes  
like crimson eyes spread upon a rock. It is not  
enough. Our land escapes and the flesh  
of my thighs withers. No son  
will learn the chants which would  
hold our land together.

We pierce the white breasts,  
and braid their streaming hair through  
our loins. It blazes yellow in the sun  
turning our bodies to metal. The  
serpent is upon us. We are forced  
to live in rocks like great hunted bears.  
Tonight my woman will die, her blood  
cooling upon the rocks in pools, uniting  
with the blood of white women in the  
dust. It will be enough to appease the gods.  
It must save us.

## MICHAEL MOOS

### Cheyenne River Valley

The hooves of the snow buffalo are thudding  
Against the dying Dakota prairie.  
But beneath the frozen sod, unseen  
By the sand blind eyes of dirt farmers,  
There are tombs of nomadic hunters,  
Water, snail shells pressed into rock.

When the constellations graze the floor of the valley,  
Sage leaves break into green flame,  
And the grassed hills of sand change to night liquid.  
The transparent faces of the Cheyenne dead  
Sleep in clay urns,  
Floating in a dark river without end.

## MIKE NICHOLAS

### The Unbuilt Sand Castles of Hawaii

Can you imagine millions of children  
Flown by the friendly skies of United,  
from alleys, slums, delta flats  
From clogged classrooms, sewers  
From garbage cans and freight tracks,  
Flown to play along these beaches,  
Where life runs fresh along the rims . . .  
Flown to breathe this blue air,  
Where air bubbles explode across eyelids . . .  
Flown to pick the fruits of these trees,  
Where leaves go about in shades of green . . .  
Can you imagine children traveling?

The beaches are now covered with pink meat  
Marinated with mai tai and sun-tan lotion  
That grease up the sun distant above the waves.  
And each day the dead white algae  
Creeps down the high-rise;  
Some come from far away . . . the 23rd floor . . .  
Can you imagine children on the beaches  
Instead of this daily dead white algae?  
Images are made of children in the sun  
Dashing through sun rays into the waves.  
Can you imagine children traveling in the Pacific?  
Can you imagine children traveling  
As if they are simply coming to play?

## CHARLES OLSON

### Maximus, to Gloucester, Letter 157

an old Indian chief as hant  
sat on the rock between  
Tarantino's and Mr  
Randazza's and scared the piss out of  
Mr Randazza so he ran back into his  
house

The house I live in, and exactly on the back stairs,  
is the sight

of the story  
told me by

Mr Misuraca, that,  
his mother, reports

that, the whole Fort Section, is  
a breeding ground of the ghosts of,

dogs, and that, on those very steps, she saw,  
as a girl, a fierce, blue, dog, come at her

as she was going out, the door

The Tarentines  
were the pests

of the coast, a bunch of shore Indians  
who raided as far south

as Gloucester, and were themselves  
conceivably  
parts among the Algonquin people

of them there 1000 AD Wikings:  
as these Sicilians

talk an Italian  
which is Punic. For the Tarantinos

where Micmacs, first spotted off La Have,  
and had been dealing,

before they got down here  
as traders with fishermen

since the beginning  
of the occupation of the coast

from whom they got  
knives and kettles

and coats and then sold them  
stolen corn, from peaceful

Indians or shamefully cowardly  
Indians who put up with these

Tarentines, huddling in their  
shabby huts begging the new-come white  
man to

help them up against this raiding bunch  
of old tough remnants of the older

coast. Or they were dogs, the Tarentinos,  
come in to feed on the after coast,

after the white man disease  
—the yellowing disease,

the Indians themselves called



what no man yet has diagnosed,

except that Indians,  
who had been hauled,

to London,  
seem somewhere,

to have brought it  
back. These Tarentines

were intrusions  
on all the coast, east

of Penobscot Bay

## RONALD OVERTON

### Found Poems

#### I Indian Un-horsed

The Indians were wonderful  
bareback riders—  
but the superior weapons  
of our Western Pioneers  
overcame the native skill and cunning  
of the red savages.

Here we see an Indian  
shot right off his wild horse.

#### II Ambush!

The lonely pioneer  
was plodding his lonesome way  
along the floor of the Canyon,  
when the sudden sound

of a rolling pebble  
caused him to wheel around.

There

on top of the cliff  
hostile Indians lay in ambush.

The white man shot twice  
and two red-skins bit the dust!

### III Doe-Wah-Jack

A very hardy Indian was Doe-Wah-Jack  
and renowned for his fortitude.

In praying to the Great Spirit  
he would go as long as four days  
without eating,  
or drinking  
or sleeping.

### IV Ma-Ta-He-Hah

They called him "Old Bear"  
because he was the mystery medicine man  
of the Mandan tribe.

All the herbs in the forest were known to him,  
and many a baby Indian's stomach trouble  
did he cure with his rhubarb roots  
and sulphur solutions.

### V Geronimo

Before this Apache war lord

was finally captured by the Federal troops  
and put in prison, many  
were the bloody, vicious raids he made  
in New Mexico and Arizona.

He was captured once before by General Cook,  
but cunningly managed to escape.

Not so lucky the second time, he  
languished in prison until the end of his days.

## GUY OWEN

### Who Speaks For The Red Man?

Who speaks for the Red Man  
Now the black man's found a tongue:  
Chippewa, Hopi, Sioux,  
Seminole, Lumbee, Ute?

Who lifts their heroes in song:  
Crazy Horse, Tecumseh, Joseph,  
Black Hawk, Little Wolf, Philip?

The sacred hoop is broken,  
The prayer feathers scattered,  
The kivas are empty  
and desolate as the watering holes of buffalo,

Still: a wind is rising like a cry  
from Wounded Knee,  
In pathless woods an owl scrapes at the dark . . .  
Listen: in the veins of earth comes a throbbing  
like muted drums  
that will never cease.

## MARGE PIERCY

### Curse of the earth magician on a metal land

Marching, a dream of wind in our chests,  
a dream of thunder in our legs,  
we tied up midtown Manhattan for half an hour,  
the Revolutionary Contingent and Harlem,  
but it did not happen  
because it was not reported in any newspaper.  
The riot squad was waiting at the bottom of 42nd  
Street  
to disperse us into uncertain memory.  
A buffalo said to me  
I used to crop and ruminate on LaSalle Street in  
Chicago  
and the grasses were sweet under the black tower of  
the Board of Trade.  
Now I stand in the zoo next to the yaks.  
Let the ghosts of those recently starved rise  
and like piranhas in ten seconds flat chew down to  
public bones  
the generals and the experts on anti-personnel  
weapons  
and the senators and the oil men and the lobbyists  
and the sleek smiling sharks who dance at the  
Diamond Ball.  
I am the earth magician about to disappear into the  
ground.  
This is butterfly's war song about to disappear into  
the fire  
Put the eagle to sleep.  
I see from the afternoon papers  
that we have bought another country

and are cutting the natives down to build jet  
airstrips.

A common motif in monumental architecture in the  
United States

is an eagle with wings spread, beak open  
and the glove grasped in his claws.

Put the eagle to sleep.

This is butterfly's war song addressed to the Congress  
of Sharks.

You are too fat, you eat bunches of small farmers like  
radishes for breakfast.

You are rotting your teeth with sugar  
refined from the skulls of Caribbean children. Thus  
far

we have only the power of earth magicians, dream  
and song and marching,  
to dance the eagle to sleep.

We are about to disappear into the fire.

There is only time for a brief curse by a chorus of  
ghosts

of Indians murdered with smallpox and repeating  
rifles on the plains,

of Indians shot by the marines in Santo Domingo,  
napalmed in the mountains of Guatemala last week.

There will be no more spring.

Your corn will sprout in rows and the leaves will  
lengthen

but there will be no spring running clean water  
through the bones,

no soft wind full of bees, no long prairie wind  
bearing feathers of geese.

It will be cold or hot. It will step on your necks.

A pool of oil will hang over your cities,

oil slick will scum your lakes and streams killing the  
trout and the ducklings,

concrete and plastic will seal the black earth and the  
red earth,  
your rivers hum with radioactivity and the salmon  
float belly up,  
and your mountains be hollowed out to hold the files  
of great corporations,  
and shale oil sucked from under the Rockies till the  
continent buckles.  
Look! children of the shark and the eagle  
you have no more spring. You do not mind.  
You turn on the sunlamp and the airconditioning  
and sit at the television watching the soldiers dance.

## DAVID RAY

### The Indians Near Red Lake

When the white man comes  
he comes to see a grave,  
to look at the little house  
over the grave, to ask  
how the dead can eat the food  
placed there  
and always we give him the same answer  
"The same way, white man,  
your dead can smell your flowers."

The white man is interested  
only in death.  
He cares nothing for the story  
of the pregnant girls  
digging the banana-shaped roots

of the yellow lily  
with their toes, tucking one  
in at the waist for good luck.

The white man wants to hear  
about the German scalp  
brought back in nineteen forty-five.  
He wants to hear how  
it was put on the Chief's grave  
after three nights of scalpdance.  
He is amused  
to think the Chief may stroll  
in the other world  
with the Germans and the small Japanese  
for servants.

He walks through the weeds of our yards  
to see a grave.  
He brings nothing  
else, none of the friendship,  
the fellowship we've spread our nets for  
for years, in our yards,  
beside the abandoned Buicks,  
waiting for him to notice.

The nets go on catching spiders  
and what the white man throws away as  
he drives through, fast,  
in his car.  
We take our smiles to town  
but neither do they catch anything.  
Our nets are dry.  
Yet we watch them.

## ADRIENNE RICH

8/1/68

The order of the small town on the riverbank,  
forever at war with the order of the dark and starlit  
soul.

We you free then all along, Jim, free at last,  
of everything by the white boy's fantasies?

We pleaded guilty till we saw what rectitude was  
like:  
its washed hands, and dead nerve, and sclerotic eye.

I long ago stopped dreaming of pure justice, your  
honor—  
my crime was to believe we could make cruelty  
obsolete.

The body has been exhumed from the burnt-out  
bunker;  
the teeth counted, the contents of the stomach told  
over.

And you, Custer, the Squaw-killer, hero of primitive  
schoolrooms—  
where are you buried, what is the condition of your  
bones?



B. H. ROGERS

*from* The Man Above the Land

“Heyna” the son  
of an Omaha  
Sioux whose  
fathers  
unceremoniously  
will bury him in  
potter’s field

          doesn’t look to the sky  
above the Winnebago Indian school mission  
he doesn’t pray to his God or roam over  
the prairies; the house of his children;  
he is beyond being a broken man

          as wild rice scattered from the chaff  
that’s broken and scattered by the wind

          “Heyna” is on the high  
road he’s flying    fly  
fly like seed pods into  
gourds that turn yellow and grow hard in the land

# MICHAEL RUMAKER

## Poem

Indians, stop interrupting my dreams—

Let me sleep the white death.

Blacks, stop interrupting my sleep—

Dream my dead whiteness

back in my/your body.

My death is to stop time

To shut my eyes to space

(forgive me, Charles)

the vast alkaline

light of the west

blinds me with fear.

I kill it with a bending inward

as my fathers killed you

who moved with grace and assurance

in that space

that land

we have never loved

except for what we have stolen from it

and never put back anything

but sludge.

I, the son, dream murderous dreams.

I, the son, ache to be

taken back into the land again,

into the blood-rich soil

that cracked your feet

and held you close, open,

alive.

# RUTH LISA SCHECHTER

## Along Missouri

on cradleboards of America  
language  
leaped to prairie and spruce root  
in deer hoofs like castanets to  
South Dakota sunrise beaded  
Indian necklace on forehead from girl to squaw  
NAVAHO on forehead traveling  
APACHE southwest over desert  
on small Spanish horses  
shearing seed digging  
fine arrowhead  
chipped to a point  
On cradleboard of American tent-  
dwelling marriage along Missouri  
dancing in raven mask and grizzly bear  
CEREMONY FOR FIRE  
we inherited  
the language the free verse daring  
lightning poetry  
singing no tune Chinook and buffalo bleeding  
near feathers of GREAT SPIRITS  
dying through  
Hollywood movie finale  
hunter and slave THE EPIC FILM of Cecil B.  
DeMille on a fiddle waltzing  
in snapshots and lilies  
Were they cruel  
in willow boats  
signalling PERMIT PEACE?  
yet Iroquois sons and daughters were safe  
from Iroquois warriors safe from the civilized  
shooting them down

to lie dreaming      mouth open  
on university green      left      right  
Tuscaloosa      Mississippi      Ohio      where  
we sent our children  
with sunflower faces      believing  
history of      Patrick Henry with Jefferson  
blessing      we sent our children      enchanted  
pledging their blood      their allegiance  
on arrows and alphabets  
   on cradleboards of America  
chipped  
in free speech.

## RAY SMITH

### A Fragment for Last Pony of the Dacotah

That was our country, the Four Winds know it,  
From Bear Butte through the hills to where you have  
   named Montana.

My own people stayed out with Rain-in-the-Face  
When others untied the knots in their ponies' tails  
And went in as Three Star said to the reservation.

This was the winter before Longhair's coming.

The snow came, the first heavy snow,  
White everywhere, but the river dark and whirling.  
That was an empty time, the women glum,  
The tepee hunger-silent, no cooking smell,  
But parched corn eaten under the buffalo robe.

I went to hunt with Crow-That-Does Not-Fly.  
This was my wearing, buckskin, but no coat,  
No hat or mittens like I'm wearing now.

On foot, the second day we found the track of deer  
 And followed all day, lurching in the snow.  
 Near dark we saw the buck under a tree  
 Nose down to scuff the snow. Crow-That-Does-Not-Fly  
 Shot his one-bullet gun, and I an arrow.  
 While it thrashed we ran up with drawn knives  
 And slit the belly first to warm our hands.  
 That coming back was slow, the deer frozen heavy,  
 But soon enough laughter filled our tepees.  
 Even the wrinkles of Small Bear, my mother's father,  
 Smoothed out as he lighted his pipe with vigor.  
 "Make a feast," he said. "Put some taste in all this  
 woodsmoke!"

Other times we starved, waiting for spring.

A Crow war party stole one night through a  
 snowstorm

And drove six ponies back over the Rosebud.  
 Fast Elk called me through the tent-flap  
 "Hurry with weapons!" I seized my bear-tooth  
 necklace

(My war medicine) and took my bow and knife.

Outside there was shouting in the first gray light,  
 Men and horses dim in the snowfall. Fast Elk,  
 The party leader, brought my pony up.  
 He said "This will shake the sleep out of your eyes!"  
 Seven of us plunged west, the village waking behind  
 us.

Soon we rode in a moving cloud of snow  
 Single file. We crossed where the Rosebud narrows.  
 I felt the icy splash upon my ankle.  
 Our thighs aching with cold we rode,  
 The horses faltering sometimes in the drift,  
 Their steaming breath whirled with the windy snow.

## WILLIAM STAFFORD

### People Who Went by in Winter

The morning man came in to report that something had crossed the field in the night during the storm. He heard ribbons of wind snap at their tether and a sound like some rider saying the ritual for help, a chant or a song. When we went out all we found were deep, slow tracks in freezing mud and some sticks tied together hanging from the lowest branch of the oldest tree by the river.

While beginning snow eddied and curtained thicker and thicker, on, we looked, The grass hurried by, seething, then silent, brown, all the way to the west, a little touch-by-touch trail to the mountains. Our boss turned back: "No. We can't help them. They sing till they find a place to winter. They have tents. They make it, somehow." He looked off that long way, where the grass tossed.

Riding home, he told us:  
"My people were like them,  
over around Grand Prairie—slaves once,  
then landowners. Now they pass like  
this, and I heard them, because  
I wake up and am partly theirs."



tubes full of  
Last Suppers  
of Cheeseburgers—

But, the Africans walked at night  
black as Christs  
shrouded  
in whiteskinned  
business suits of cellophane and aluminum foil  
under the moon  
of the coyote.

But, the Africans walked at night  
in Italian shoes.

But, the Africans walked at night  
through dark light  
to uranium women  
in unlit hogans  
who welcomed them blindly  
to the way of beauty.

But, the Africans walked at night  
medicine bags and stone balls  
in their attaché cases.

Where the warriors  
lie in motels  
of the Navajos  
eyeing redhanded  
knives of yellow  
butter eaters  
the blunted spears  
of the eunuched  
Indians—

But, the Africans walked at night



wondering where  
John Wayne was hiding  
his red cosmetics—  
why Gary Cooper shot  
Pocahontas—  
                  why  
the warriors of Jeff Chandler  
washed their wounds white  
with detergents

But, the Africans walked at night  
to wickiups with beautyrest beds.

But, the Africans walked at night  
to exercise  
tours of diplomacy  
with the State  
departmentalized guides who dreamt of reddest sex  
frozen in ice cream cones of blackest secrets.

But, the Africans walked at night  
four hundred miles  
of years of death  
marched to wars  
across the deserts  
of history to be buried  
with unborn Indians  
in concentration camps  
of the Army of Christ.

But, the Africans walked at night  
disguised as one million dead Indians, yelling,  
Uruhu!

# GENEVIEVE TAGGARD

## The Luau

Odor of algarroba, lure of release,  
The smell of red lehua and the crisp scent of  
maile . . .

These words and images will help you after a little.  
Hypnotic words emerge and bloom in the mind,  
Anaesthetic names . . . Dry buzz of bees  
Who make a honey eaten at early breakfast  
From a comb like a broken coral . . .  
Do dreams foretell the honey? Break the spell.

So I come home in the valley of Kalihi,  
My bare feet on hard earth, hibiscus with  
stamen-tongue  
Twirled in my fingers like a paper windmill,  
A wheel of color, crimson, the petals large,  
Kiss of the petal, tactile, light intense . . .

Now I am back again, I can touch the children:  
My human race, in whom was a human dwelling,  
Whose names are all the races—of one skin.  
For so our games ran tacit, without blur.

What brings me back with giant steps to them?  
What was the feast that woke this fabulous thirst?  
What was the summer fruit we found and ate  
Boldly, with the children of Adam?

A game and a daily search  
In the harvest of trees. We played a parable.  
We possessed a valley, devoured the juicy, dense

Jewels of appetite hung in fresco sweeps,  
 In garlands and in fountains toward the sea.  
 Mangoes of golden flesh, with turpentine  
 Peel and odor. Cut plums of inky stain  
 And the pucker of persimmons. Dates to be got  
 By stepping up a tree trunk. Coconuts  
 with custard centers. Rose and custard apple,  
 Eugenia, pink, lemon and little orange,  
 Guava seedy and tart, and the hidden poha,  
 And the sacklike fig, to be ripped, to be seen, to be  
     tasted.

How rasping sweet the suck of sugar cane—  
 Papaya and banana taken for granted.

With giant steps, in sleep and troubled pain  
 I return to the fabulous fear, the old communion,  
 With bodiless hunger and thirst. Why have I come  
 Away from the adult world where race is war?

Here we are dipping and passing the calabash  
 In a ceremony of friends; I also;  
 But in frenzy and pain distort  
 the simple need, knowing how blood is shed:

*To sit together*

*Drinking the blue ocean, eating the sun  
 Like a fruit . . .*

# QUINCY TROUPE

## Red Bone Pot Lunch

California/L. A. sun people  
beating down my black singing days  
into the blood fusion  
comes the rhythm of their poems  
wheeling far-out over wide  
spaced days comes the  
image-song blending  
sun/sea-salt spray

the music in salt waves

where days pass when one thinks  
the entire beautiful world of long  
legged bikini-clad super-bad ladies  
tan their black  
brown/yellow/pink-bodies  
beneath an eye-balling sun  
on the burning-shifting sands  
of Malibu Beach

& the days burn drifting  
piling years, as freezing Wyoming snow  
drifts during winter; as snow-cold  
froze the grotesque twisted body  
of Big Foot, at the battle  
of Wounded Knee

But there are many sorry specters who will  
tell you

that all the bleeding days passing through

their sick sterile worlds, are as beautiful

as all the beautiful ladies  
tanning on Malibu Beach

## CHARLIE VERMONT

### Dream

(for Bill)

I cut the cyst out  
from above my right eye  
it was nothing, a simple operation  
as soon as I touched it with the knife  
it popped out and to my surprise  
it was only an Indianhead nickel  
with skin over it

## MARK VINZ

### Dakota Death Song

Third moon of the third season.  
The evening elms have summoned them,  
ancestors, chanting the colors of their death.

They come now  
disguised in the fiery hooves of buffalo,  
hidden in the talons of hunter owls.

I am discovered  
crouching on the floor of an abandoned lake,  
and the rooms of my body are crowded  
with their spirit eyes.

Old men  
spilling their dead seed across startled pores  
the ancient hands of women  
plucking the voice from its throat.

Tendons separate,  
the cage of bones is opened—  
flayed skin drying on the ridgepoles  
of the night.

And now the scalping knife,  
the lonely blade edge  
dropping from the sunrise like a sigh:  
    child, where are you,  
    blood of our blood,  
    flesh of our flesh!

## MARNIE WALSH

**John Knew-The-Crow**  
(Fort Yates, North Dakota, 1880)

I saw a blue winged bird  
sitting silent in the marsh,  
his brothers flown away.  
Ice grew among his feathers.

I saw a snake  
in the forest rock.  
She gave me warning, I gave her none;  
I wear hers against my breast.

I saw the buffalo in rut.  
They could not see me  
for the earth ran away into the sky,  
and the sound carried off the sun.

I saw the turtle on the grass,  
too big, too blind to move.  
His neck died beneath my ax,  
but the claws walked on toward the water.

I saw my mother and my father die,  
and the soldiers took me away.

# WILLIAM WANTLING

## Initiation

20 years after cubscouts  
WEBELOS returned for me  
carried me up Stone Mountain  
under the purple double-dome  
left me there  
on the 3rd day I saw her  
etched into the window of my hut  
& she was hawk, she was eagle  
hanging the edge of a red & dying  
    sun  
black, hanging, poised  
then wheeling, diving the void  
screamed down upon me  
clutched me  
we were one  
carried us up, up above the  
    sun  
into the no-longer-dying  
light, ah the light  
  
why should I return?



## RAMONA WEEKS

### An Aleutian Illusion

Beneath a cairn I slept on stepping stones,  
on the long arm flailing in sadness, on the Aleutians  
I lived there, decoying the otter with fog

and hoping for the old poryishki  
to come, ringing the doorbells of sleep.  
It is too early now for the sun.

Ivory shows its youth to the wolverines.  
It bares its portcullis blaze in  
shell middens that crouch by the strait.

I set out upon my oblivion's  
task. Knocking about with narwhals, I answer  
only crowning blows, lost in their royal

horned haze. We seek a snail that drips purple,  
its blood dyeing the arachnid beach,  
strewn with the masts of old clippers

carved near the Clyde or the Amyr.  
"I am here," shrieks the telegraph glass  
insulator, buried in soup and the wrestled

shell hairpins of elderly reindeer.  
"Where?" asks the polar bear, enamored of messages.  
Between them the borealis flutters

like auklets chained by their nostrils  
or lemmings swimming hard in the tides. Light fails  
and time grieves in my thumbs,

whizzing fishline bearing the initials  
of Rosicrucians to unbelievers who smack  
of their heresy deep in the sea.

Borne of silver salvers of winter, the drowned  
gasp by, filibustering rhetoricians  
out of their element, caught in the cold

where it snaps like brutal elastic  
out of the north. I am your snow  
doppelganger, closer than a snakeskin of ice,

chained to your roots and taking over  
as bells do, eliminating my rivals,  
turning a dark blue face to my northern

papa, saying, "This man who alternates  
joy with seed pearls and claptrap must share  
my throne with me." My papa has pale

hirelings who ready the coach and the four  
corners of the world. By quadrangles we rust  
toward our whitest corners and our densest poles.

The undulant grotto of the Aleutians is  
the clawed hand of our receiver. Banked  
by ice hearths we learn to love burning.

## ANNA WHITE FEATHER

### Near Tassajara Bon Owl—to be sung

eyes like these neither give off nor receive energy  
I know this condition well  
it has affected me all of my life  
it is very dangerous  
you cannot know of the existence of the scorpion  
until after he bites

you ask if a child is born out of shit  
the answer is  
that the child is surrounded by hot blood  
and heartbeat  
that is why  
we now play drums around this fire

Julian is a beautiful name  
so is Rachel the child, wearing a necklace of yarn  
Ira-Ora-Aura Leah means wild cow  
with feather masks more delicate than air  
Julian and Rachel the child eat together  
the graceful fruits of Earth  
o dark Mother primordial  
devour us not

vernal:  
all the little children love peppermint tea  
and angelica  
allah dada  
allah dada

I thank that which is invisible and which I don't  
understand.

I thank this language.

Perceived word-for-word this is but ceremonial food  
for the dead.

So do not be deluded, but know this form-by-spirit  
and the energy in these hollow bones will not elude  
you.

## NANCY WILLARD

### I can remember when there were trees

I can remember when there were trees,  
great tribes of spruces who deckled themselves in  
light,  
beeches buckled in pewter, meeting like Quakers,  
the golden birch, all cutwork satin,  
courtesan of the mountains; the paper birch  
trying all summer to take off its clothes  
like the swaddlings of the newborn.

The hands of a sassafras blessed me,  
I saw maples fanning the fire in their stars,  
heard the coins of the aspens rattling like teeth,  
saw cherry trees spraying fountains of light,  
smelled the wine my heel pressed from ripe apples,  
saw a thousand planets bobbing like bells  
on the sleeve of the sycamore, chestnut, and lime.

The Algonquins knew that a tree is worthy of  
worship,  
A few wise men from their tribe broke through the  
sky,  
climbing past worlds to come and the rising moon  
on the patient body of the tree of life,  
and brought back the souls of the newly slain,

no bigger than apples, and dressed the tree  
as one of themselves and danced.

Even the conquerors of this country  
lifted their eyes and found the trees  
more comely than gold: *Bright green trees,  
the whole land so green it is pleasure to look on it,  
and the greatest wonder to see the diversity.  
During that time, I walked among trees,  
the most beautiful things I had ever seen.\**

Watching the shadows of trees, I made peace with  
mine.

Their forked darkness gave motion to morning light.  
Every night the world fell to the shadows,  
and every morning came home, the dogwood floating  
its petals like moons on a river of air,  
the oak kneeling in wood sorrel and fern,  
the willow washing its hair in the stream.

And I saw how the logs from the mill floated  
downstream, saw otters and turtles that rode them,  
and though I heard the saws whine in the woods,  
I never thought men were stronger than trees.  
I never thought those tribes would join their brothers,  
the buffalo and the whale, the leopard, the seal, the  
wolf,  
and the men of this country who knew how to sing  
them.

Nothing I ever saw washed off the sins of the world  
so well as the first snow dropping on trees.

\* From Columbus's journals, as adapted by William Carlos Williams.

We shoveled the pond clear and skated under their  
branches,  
our voices muffled in their huge silence.  
The trees were always listening to something else.  
They didn't hear the beetle with the hollow tooth  
grubbing for riches, gnawing for empires, for gold.

Already the trees are a myth,  
half gods, half giants, in whom nobody believes.  
But I am the oldest woman on earth,  
I can remember when there were trees.

## KEITH WILSON

### Koyemsi

Those mudheads. Dancing  
clowns, born of brother  
& sister mating. Eaters  
of feces.

Splayed feet. Mud  
between the toes, clay  
masks & bodies

—humor, insanity  
remain, in them,  
sacred

& these gods are not  
under masks, watch  
out of the wind  
rain growing corn.

Children, children  
 with pollen in their mouths  
 laughing, please them,  
*koyemsi*, risen from earth

they who led the People  
 from the Underworld, risen  
 from deep clay, the singing  
 shines in their victory, rite

a celebration of horrors conquered  
 by dancing feet & laughter, mica  
 particles flashing out of clay  
 the laughter comes, dancing.

## PHILIP WOFFORD

### The Old and the Young Dance Separately

Pueblo kids in feathers sprayed day-glo  
 stomp high-kneed in woolworth leggings—  
 flashing dancers on leave from Indian School  
 stomp once more through dust and stop.

Old woman selling bowls  
 on ceremonial day explains,  
 wears turquoise and silver  
 like medals of endurance,  
 explains marks she made in clay:

“This is mountain,  
 this bird,  
 this lightning.

It has always been so.”

Then, the old men begin moving,  
out of mist they shuffle  
in worn work clothes they move  
as if just crossing a phantom distance  
to take their turn with earth and sky.

The bright-winged kids  
stand jiving with cokes  
and portable rock,  
resting, watching,  
at the crowd's edge,  
waiting to get back in,  
to stomp and shake dust  
like clouds of gunsmoke.

It takes a long, long time for the old men  
to move in their small half circle  
from one end of the pueblo to the other,  
it takes time for their voices to reach us,  
for their hands to shape the air and give it bodied  
spirit.

All day  
the dance changes,  
fast, then slow—  
bright young, grey old—  
both so beautiful,  
so separate, atop  
the high pile of stone,  
their home,  
where nothing grows.

The old and the young dance separately,  
and move with the sun's arc into darkness.

They meet somewhere we do not see.



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# **Traditional Indian Poems**

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## Introduction

RARIHOKWATS\*

Words can be translated, but the settings, the speakers, the situations are all left behind. We can spend a half-hour or more shuffling in a circle singing over and over words which translate simply to "It is nice! It is nice!" with great spiritual esthetic (poetic?) satisfaction—something very impossible to do in English, and completely impossible to reduce to print. It is the poetic experience that counts, not the poetry.

No one who has experienced the strength of the words of our Grandparents will be satisfied to see that power reduced to a strange language, metered neatly in sterile lines of unfeeling words. The richness of the ceremonial life, the security of having emerged from this land, surrounded by your people, give words uttered by loved elders meaning which their literate renderings can only hint.

Thoughts that have endured for so many tens of thousands of years still live because they are alive, renewed with each passing turn of the cycles. And they are meant to live, not be "preserved." The poetry of the People lingers in the morning mists and is painted on the land by every setting sun. It is poetry stirred by the Mysteries of Life, whispered by the winds and waters—anyone who knows the Creation can find it there, and voice it from the silence of his being.

For those whose lives have lost primitive (primary) meaning, the translations of the Ancients into English may be as close as they will get to knowing what it means to be a part of this land and life. They are to the real poetry what a travel-agency folder is to the journey itself—a well-dressed but pale abstraction that leaves a wistful thought that someday you too might have this experience.

Listen to the words of your Grandmother, the Moon. It was she who taught the people the Night Chant.

\* Rarihokwats is a member of the Bear Clan of the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne. He edits *Akwesasne Notes*, a newspaper of native affairs published at Rooseveltown, New York, 13683.

Akwesasne is the Mohawk word for "where the partridge drums."

Listen to the Grandfathers, the Thunderers. It is they who sing the Horse Song the best.

Fast, and sit in silence in a sacred spot. Let your heart teach you to lament for your sons.

Talk to the trees and caress their leaves. Find the words to thank them for their beauty, their shade, their fruit, their shelter.

Become a part of the winds. Go where they go, rustle the grass and bring the rains. Cleanse the air, and return to tell your people where you have been.

In ways such as these, you will voice the poetry of the Creation, the traditional poetry of the Native Peoples. It is in the hearts of the people that the poetry is placed to live.

We are your Grandchildren, Ancient Ones! Speak to us!

## HHE-THA-A-HI: Eagle Wing

Dated 1881

My brothers, the Indians, must always be remembered in this land. Out of our languages we have given names to many beautiful things which will always speak of us. Minnehaha will laugh at us, Seneca will shine in our image, Mississippi will murmur our woes. The broad Iowa and the rolling Dakota and the fertile Michigan will whisper our names to the sun that kisses them. The roaring Niagara, the sighing Illinois, the singing Delaware, will chant unceasingly our Dat-wa-e (Death Song). Can it be that you and your children will hear that eternal song without a stricken heart? We have been guilty of only one sin—we have had possessions that the white man coveted. We moved away toward the setting sun; we gave up our homes to the white man.

My brethren, among the legends of my people it is told how a chief, leading the remnant of his people, crossed a great river, and striking his tepee-stake upon the ground, exclaimed, "A-la-ba-ma!" This in our language means "Here we may rest!" But he saw not the future. The white man came: he and his people could not rest there; they were driven out, and in a dark swamp they were thrust down into the slime and killed. The word he so sadly spoke has given a name to one of the white man's states. There is no spot under those stars that now smile upon us where

the Indian can plant his foot and sigh "A-la-ba-ma." It may be that Wakanda will grant us such a place. But it seems that it will be only at His side.

## ABENAKI

### The Parted Lovers

#### THE MAN SINGS

My parents think they can separate me  
from the girl I love;  
We have vowed to love each other while  
we live.  
Their commands are vain: we shall see  
each other while the world lasts.  
Yes! let them say or do what they like;  
we shall see each other while the rocks  
stand.

#### THE WOMAN SINGS

Here I sit on this point, whence I can see  
the man that I love.  
Our people think that they can sever us;  
but I shall see him while the world  
lasts.  
Here shall I remain, in sight of the one  
I love.

—Translated by John Reade

# APACHE

## Songs of the Masked Dancers

### I.

*creation*  
When the earth was made;  
When the sky was made;  
When my songs were first heard;  
The holy mountain was standing toward me with  
life.

At the center of the sky, the holy boy walks four ways  
with life.

Just mine, my mountain became; standing toward me  
with life.

Gan\* children became; standing toward me with life.

When the sun goes down to the earth,  
Where Mescal Mountain lies with its head toward the  
sunrise,  
Black spruce became; standing up with me.

### 2.

Right at the center of the sky the holy boy with life  
walks in four directions.

Lightning with life in four colors comes down four  
times.

The place which is called black spot with life;  
The place which is called blue spot with life;  
The place which is called yellow spot with life;  
The place which is called white spot with life;

\* The Apache call their Masked Dancers "Gan."

They have heard about me,  
The black Gans dance in four places.  
The sun starts down toward the earth.

3.

The living sky black-spotted;  
The living sky blue-spotted;  
The living sky yellow-spotted;  
The living sky white-spotted;  
The young spruce as girls stood up for their dance in  
the way of life.

When my songs first were, they made my songs with  
words of jet.

Earth when it was made,

Sky when it was made,

Earth to the end,

Sky to the end,

Black Gan, black thunder, when they came toward  
each other,

The various bad things that used to be vanished.

The bad wishes which were in the world vanished.

The lightning of black thunder struck four times for  
them.

It struck four times for me.

4.

When first my songs became,

When the sky was made,

When the earth was made,

The breath of the Gans on me made only of down;

When they heard about my life;



Where they got their life;  
When they heard about me;  
It stands.

## 5.

The day broke with slender rain.  
The place which is called "lightning's water stands,"  
The place which is called "where the dawn strikes,"  
Four places where it is called "it dawns with life,"  
I land there.  
The sky boys, I go among them.  
He came to me with long life.  
When he talked over my body with the longest life,  
The voice of thunder spoke well four times.  
Holy sky boy spoke to me four times.  
When he talked to me my breath became.

—*Translated by Pliny Earle Goddard*

# CHEROKEE

## To Destroy Life

Listen! Now I have come to step over your  
soul.

You are of the Wolf clan.

Your name is A'yu'nini.

Your spittle I have put at rest under the  
earth.

I have come to cover you over with the  
black rock.

I have come to cover you over with the  
black cloth.

I have come to cover you over with the  
black slabs, never to reappear.

Toward the black coffin of the upland in  
the Darkening Land your paths shall  
stretch out.

So shall it be for you.

The clay of the upland has come to cover  
you.

Instantly the black clay has lodged there  
where it is at rest at the black houses  
in the Darkening Land.

With the black coffin and with the black  
slabs I have come to cover you.

Now your soul has faded away.

It has become blue.

When darkness comes your spirit shall  
grow less and dwindle away, never to  
reappear.

Listen!

—*Translated by James Mooney*



# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## The Eagle's Song

Said the Eagle:

I was astonished  
When I heard that there was death.

My home, alas,  
Must I leave it!  
Summits that see all  
Shall I see you no more!

North I went,  
Leaning on the wind;  
Through the forest resounded  
The cry of the hunted doe.

East I went,  
Through the hot dawning;  
There was the smell of death in my nostrils.

South I went, seeking  
The place where there is no death.  
Weeping I heard  
The voice of women  
Wailing for their children.

West I went,  
On the world encompassing water;  
Death's trail was before me.

People, O people,  
Needs be that we must die!

Therefore let us make  
Songs together.  
With a twine of songs to bind us  
To the middle Heaven,  
The white way of souls.  
There we shall be at rest,  
With our songs  
We shall roam no more!

—*Reexpressed by Mary Austin*

## CHIPPEWA

### My Love Has Departed

A loon,  
I thought it was.  
But it was  
My love's  
Splashing Oar.

—*Translated by Frances Densmore*

## HAVASUPAI

### Sun, my relative

Sun, my relative  
Be good coming out  
Do something good for us.

Make me work,  
So I can do anything in the garden  
I hoe, I plant corn, I irrigate.

You, sun, be good going down at sunset  
We lay down to sleep I want to feel good.

While I sleep you come up.  
Go on your course many times,  
Make good things for us men.

Make me always the same as I am now.

# IROQUOIS

## Death of a Son

My son!

Listen once more  
to the words of your mother.

You were brought into life  
with her pains.

You were nourished  
with her life.

She has attempted to be faithful  
in raising you up.

When you were young  
she loved you  
as her life.

Your presence has been a source  
of great joy to her.

Upon you she depended  
for support and comfort  
in her declining days.

She had always expected  
to gain the end of the path of life  
before you.

But you have outstripped her,  
and gone before her.

Our great and wise creator  
has ordered it so.

Your friends and relatives  
have gathered about your body,

to look upon you  
for the last time.

We mourn, as with one mind,  
your departure from us.

We too have but a few days more  
before we take the same path.

It is no longer possible  
for us to walk together.

We release you for your journey.

Do not let the things of this earth  
hinder you.

Do not let your friends  
trouble your mind.

Regard none of these things.

These are all my words, my son.

—*Translated by Ely S. Parker*



# MESCALERO APACHE

## Dawn Song

(from the Gotal Ceremony)

The black turkey in the east spreads his tail  
The tips of his beautiful tail are the white dawn

Boys are sent running to us from the dawn  
They wear yellow shoes of sunbeams

They dance on streams of sunbeams

Girls are sent dancing to us from the rainbow  
They wear shirts of yellow

They dance above us the dawn maidens

The sides of the mountains turn to green  
The tops of the mountains turn to yellow

And now above us on the beautiful mountains it is  
dawn.

—*Translated by Pliny Earle Goddard*

# NAVAJO

## A Prayer of the Night Chant

Tsegihi,

House made of dawn,

House made of evening light.

House made of the dark cloud.

House made of male rain.

House made of dark mist.

House made of female rain.

House made of pollen.

House made of grasshoppers.

Dark cloud is at the door.

The trail out of it is dark cloud.

The zigzag lightning stands high upon it.

Male deity!

Your offering I make.

I have prepared a smoke for you.

Restore my feet for me.

Restore my legs for me.

Restore my body for me.

Restore my mind for me.

This very day take out your spell for me.

Your spell remove for me.

You have taken it away for me.

Far off it has gone.

Happily I recover.

Happily my interior becomes cool.

Happily I go forth.

My interior feeling cool, may I walk.

No longer sore, may I walk.

Impervious to pain, may I walk.

With lively feelings may I walk.

As it used to be long ago, may I walk.  
 Happily may I walk.  
 Happily, with abundant dark clouds, may I walk.  
 Happily, with abundant showers, may I walk.  
 Happily, with abundant plants, may I walk.  
 Happily, on a trail of pollen, may I walk.  
 Happily may I walk.  
 Being as it used to be long ago, may I walk.  
 May it be beautiful before me.  
 May it be beautiful behind me.  
 May it be beautiful below me.  
 May it be beautiful above me.  
 May it be beautiful all around me.  
 In beauty it is finished.

—*Translated by Washington Matthews*

## NAVAJO

### From a Sand Painting

There  
 the Earth Father high in the House of the Sky—  
 in his hands holds the sun,  
 in his hands holds the moon,  
 in his heart holds the earth.

There  
 the Earth Father high above the rainbow he stands—  
 from the sun in his hands  
 comes the light of all things;  
 from the moon comes the dreams;  
 from his heart comes the life of all things,  
 from his feet comes the joy.

The sun and the moon  
 in his hands send the rain,  
 the rainbow the kiss of the sun and the rain,  
 the smile of the sky.

The sun and the moon and the sky,  
 the Earth Father,  
 the Earth Mother;  
 the clouds and the rain brothers,  
 Elder Brothers,  
 hold the prayer plumes for man,  
 wave the prayer plumes for man,  
 wave the prayer plumes for man.

Let us dance in our joy, let us sing,  
 to our Brothers, our Brothers Above,  
 Elder Brothers  
 in the House of the Sky.

—Translated by Ina Sizer Cassidy

## NAVAJO

### The War God's Horse Song

I am the Turquoise Woman's son.  
 On top of Belted Mountain  
 Beautiful horses—slim like a weasel!  
 My horse has a hoof like striped agate;  
 His fetlock is like a fine eagle plume;  
 His legs are like quick lightning.  
 My horse's body is like an eagle-plumed arrow;  
 My horse has a tail like a trailing black cloud.

I put flexible goods on my horse's back;  
The Little Holy Wind blows through his hair.

His mane is made of short rainbows.  
My horse's ears are made of round corn.  
My horse's eyes are made of big stars.  
My horse's head is made of mixed waters  
(From the holy waters—he never knows thirst).  
My horse's teeth are made of white shell.  
The long rainbow is in his mouth for a bridle,  
    And with it I guide him.

When my horse neighs, different-colored horses  
follow.

When my horse neighs, different-colored sheep  
follow.

    I wealthy, because of him.

    Before me peaceful,  
    Behind me peaceful,  
    Under me peaceful,  
    Over me peaceful,  
    All around me peaceful—  
    Peaceful voice when he neighs.  
    I am everlasting and peaceful.  
    I stand for my horse.

—*Interpreted by Louis Watchman*

# NEZ PERCÉ

## Chief Joseph's Surrender Speech

I am tired of fighting,

Our chiefs are killed,

Looking Glass is dead,

Toohulsote is dead.

The old men are all dead.

It is the young men who say no and yes.

He who led the young men is dead.

It is cold and we have no blankets.

The little children are freezing to death.

My people, some of them, have run away to the  
hills.

No one knows where they are—

Perhaps they are freezing to death.

I want to have time to look for my children

and see how many of them I can find.

Maybe I shall find them among the dead.

Hear me, my chiefs, I am tired,

My heart is sad and sick.

From where the sun now stands

I will fight no more forever.

—*Translated by Herbert Spinden*

# NEZ PERCÉ

## Smohalla Speaks

You ask me to plow the ground!

Shall I take a knife and tear my mother's bosom?  
Then when I die she will not take me to her bosom to  
rest.

You ask me to dig for stone!

Shall I dig under her skin for her bones?  
Then when I die I can not enter her body to be born  
again.

You ask me to cut grass and make hay and sell it,  
And be rich like white men!

But how dare I cut off my mother's hair?

It is a bad law and my people can not obey it.

I want my people to stay with me here.  
All the dead men will come to life again.

Their spirits will come to their bodies again.  
We must wait here in the homes of our fathers and  
be ready  
To meet them in the bosom of our mother.

—*Translated by James Mooney*

## OJIBWAY

### Song of a Man About to Die in a Strange Land

If I die here  
In a strange land,  
If I die  
In a land not my own,  
Nevertheless, the thunder  
The rolling thunder  
Will take me home.

If I die here, the wind,  
The wind rushing over the prairie  
The wind will take me home.

The wind and the thunder,  
They are the same everywhere,  
What does it matter, then  
If I die here in a strange land?

*—Reexpressed by Mary Austin*



# PAIUTE

## In the Beginning

In the beginning water was  
everywhere

Then the buzzard lifted and the sky  
and the water ran to the west and  
made the ocean.

Then the buzzard made the trees,  
the plants, and all the tribes, and  
all the animals.

And the grizzly, the badger, and the  
gopher,

fearing that the water would come  
back, made the mountains with  
their hands.

# PASSAMAQUODDY

## Star Song

We are the singing stars,  
We sing with our light.  
We are the birds of fire,  
Through the heavens we take our flight.

Our light is as a star,  
Making a road for spirits.

Among us are three hunters  
Forever chasing a bear.  
There never was a time  
When they three were not hunting.

We look down upon the mountains.

*—Translated by Charles Godfrey Leland  
and John Dyneley Prince*

## PLAINS CREE

### Another Happening Was . . .

another happening was  
this Blackfoot got suspicious about some man  
—he's fucking you—he says  
—o no—  
—yes he is he's fucking you. Tomorrow you go  
to the great sand-hill.—  
And the next dawn he said—You, put on  
your clothes; go out  
and for the last time look  
at the holy sun. Which  
do you want, death  
or that I cut off your nose?—  
—Cut off my nose—she said.  
He cut off her nose.

*—Translated by Armand Schwerner*

Peyote Vision

I

tried drinking coffee  
                  i would spill it  
sleeping  
would see great snakes  
                  would cry out & get up  
                  raise my cover & look around  
                  had someone called me?  
when the wind blew  
                  i heard singing  
                  people were spitting  
                  loudly i couldn't sleep  
would see things happening in a distant country  
ghosts on horseback drunk  
five or six of them were on one horse  
the song they sang was  
"even i  
                  gotta die  
                          bye & bye  
                  so what's the use of anything  
                  i think"  
later we used to sing it as a drinking song  
lots of times

—English version by Jerome Rothenberg  
from the translation by Paul Radin

## TEWA

### Song of the Sky Loom

O our Mother the Earth, O our Father the Sky,  
Your children are we, and with tired backs  
We bring you the gifts you love.  
Then weave for us a garment of brightness;  
May the warp be the white light of morning,  
May the weft be the red light of evening,  
May the fringes be the falling rain,  
May the border be the standing rainbow.  
Thus weave for us a garment of brightness,  
That we may walk fittingly where birds sing,  
That we may walk fittingly where grass is green,  
O our Mother the Earth, O our Father the Sky.

*—Translated by Herbert Joseph Spinden*

## ZUNI PRAYER

That their arms may be broken by the snow

That their arms may be broken by the snow,  
In order that the land may be thus,  
I have made my prayer sticks into living beings.

Following wherever the roads of the rain makers  
come out,

May the ice blanket spread out,  
May the ice blanket cover the country;  
All over the land

May the flesh of our earth mother  
Crack open from the cold;  
That your thoughts may bend to this,  
That your words may be to this end;  
For this with prayers I send you forth.

*—Adapted by Ruth Bunzel*

# ZUNI

## Sun Rays

See!

there across the sky  
the Drawers-of-straight-Lines  
flash their furrows of fire.  
It is the Mind of the Father  
on the borderland of Time,  
the Father,  
yearning,  
yearning for his children  
turned from the sky.

—Adapted by Ina Sizer Cassidy

## ZUNI

### The Coming of My People

In the dawning of the daylight,  
in the beginning of the world,  
from the womb of the Earth  
my People came;  
with the rumbling of eruptions,  
with the trembling of the earthquakes  
they were born.

In the blackness of midnight,  
in the formlessness of Time  
they had waited for the Word  
to emerge;  
in the stillness He had spoken,  
in the silence they had heard Him  
and obeyed.

*—Adapted by Ina Sizer Cassidy*



## Lament of a Man For His Son

Son, my son!

I will go up to the mountain  
And there I will light a fire  
To the feet of my son's spirit,  
And there lament him;  
Saying,  
O my son,  
What is my life to me, now you are departed!

Son, my son,  
In the deep earth  
We laid you softly in a Chief's robe,  
In a warrior's gear.  
Surely there,  
In the spirit land  
Your deeds attend you  
Surely,  
The corn comes to the ear again!

But I, here,  
I am the stalk that the seed-gatherers  
Descrying empty, afar, left standing.  
Son, my son!  
What is my life to me, now you are departed!

*—Adapted from the Amerindian by Mary Austin*



## Biographical Notes

ETEL ADNAN was born in Beirut, Lebanon in 1925. She has published a book, *Moonshine*, and her poems have appeared in *Where is Vietnam?* (Doubleday) and in *S. B. Gazette*, *Quixote* and other publications. "The Battle of Angels" was in manuscript.

ALTA was born in Reno, Nevada, in 1942. Her work has appeared in many magazines, and she edits for her own publishing concern, Shameless Hussy. "Thanksgiving" appeared in *The Whites of Their Eyes* (Seattle, 1970). She writes that she has Mandan ancestors.

JOHN ANGAIK was born in Tununak, Alaska, in 1941. His poem "My Native Land, the Beautiful" appeared in the *Tundra Times*, Alaska.

ROBERT BACON was born in Bristol, Connecticut, in 1946. His work has appeared in *Dine Bas-Hani*, *Warpath*, and *Drums* (Indian newspapers). "Mister Scoutmaster" was in manuscript.

MARTHA WARREN BECKWITH (1871-1959) spent her childhood in Hawaii. She published *Hawaiian Mythology*, a comprehensive survey of island literature, and has translated *The Kumulipo*, a sacred creation myth, from which the extracts in this book are taken.

STEPHEN BERG was born in Philadelphia in 1934. He has published *The Daughters*, *Poems*; *Nothing in the Word*; co-translated *Clouded Sky*; and his poems have appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *New American Review*, *Tri-Quarterly*, and other magazines. His reexpression of "The Water of Kane" was in manuscript.

DUANE BIG EAGLE was born in Claremore, Oklahoma, in 1946. His work has appeared in *Florida Quarterly* and in *Quetzal*. "Bidato" first appeared as a broadside in 1971 published by the Cranium Press in San Francisco, California.

DOLLY BIRD was born in Minnesota in 1950. Her work has appeared in *Akwesasne Notes*. "Return to the Home We Made" was published in *Akwesasne Notes*, November-December 1970.

LEW (SHORT FEATHERS) BLOCKCOLSKI was born in Enid, Oklahoma, in 1943. His work has appeared in *The Galley Sail Review* and in *Steel-*

head. "Museum Exhibition" was published in *Akwesasne Notes*, November 1971.

ROBERT BLY was born in Minnesota, 1926. His work has appeared in the *Nation*, *Naked Poetry*, and *A Poetry Reading Against the Vietnam War*. "Anarchists Fainting" was published in *Harper's Magazine*, 1970.

MILLEN BRAND was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, 1906. His book of poems *Dry Summer in Provence* was published in 1966, and his work has appeared in *The New Yorker Book of Poems*, *Seeds of Liberation*, *New American Review*. "Behold Beloved" appeared in *Chelsea Magazine* and will be included in *Local Lives*, a book in preparation.

BESMILR BRIGHAM was born in Mississippi, 1923. She is the author of *Death of the Dancing Dolls*; and her work has appeared in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* #21 and #23, and in many other magazines. "North from Tanyan" is taken from her book *Heaved from the Earth* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).

JOSEPH BRUCHAC was born in Saratoga Springs, New York, 1942. His work has appeared in *Chicago Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Hearse*, *The Nation*, and other magazines. "Indian Mountain" appeared in his book *Indian Mountain* (Ithaca House, 1971).

OLGA CABRAL was born in the West Indies, 1910. Her poems have appeared in the anthologies *Live Poetry* and *The Diamond Anthology*. "General Custer Enters Hell" comes from her book of poems *Tape Found in a Bottle* (Olivant Press, 1971).

GLADYS CARDIFF was born in Browning, Montana, 1942. Her work has appeared in *Inscape* and *Puget Soundings*. "Dragon Skate" was in manuscript.

EDMUND S. CARPENTER was born in 1922. "Men's Impotence" and "Who Comes" appeared in *Anerca* (J. M. Dent & Sons, Canada, 1959).

JAIME CARRERO was born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, in 1931. His work has appeared in *El Corno Emplumado-Mexico*; he has written seven plays, including *Pipo Subway No Sabe Reir*, which was shown in New York by Miriam Colon, and *Flag Inside*. He has also written two novels. His poem "Neo-Rican Jetliner" first appeared in *The San Juan Review*, April 1965.

HAYDEN CARRUTH was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, in 1921. He has published ten volumes of poetry, the most recent being *From Snow and Rock, From Chaos* (New Directions, Spring 1973). He is the editor of the anthology *The Voice That Is Great Within Us*

(Bantam). "At Dawn" appeared in his book *Nothing for Tigers* (Macmillan, 1965).

WILLIAM CHILDRESS was born in Hugo, Oklahoma, in 1933. His work has appeared in *Harpers*, *The Reporter*, *Good Housekeeping*, and other publications. "For an Indian Woman Dead in Childbirth" appeared in *America* and was included in his book *Lobo* (Barlenmir House, New York, 1972).

CARL CONCHA was born in Taos Pueblo, New Mexico. He has been a student at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. "The Spirit Dreams" appeared in the *South Dakota Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Summer 1969.

ROBERT J. CONLEY was born in Cushing, Oklahoma, 1940. His work has appeared in *Pembroke Magazine*, *Quetzal*, *Indian Voice Magazine*, and other publications. "We Wait" was in manuscript.

LEO CONNELLAN was born in Portland, Maine, in 1928. His work has appeared in the anthology *Where is Vietnam?* (Doubleday) and in the magazines *The Nation*, *Chelsea Review*, *New York Quarterly*, and other publications. "This Is A Stick-up" was in manuscript.

JEFFERSON DAVIS was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1944. His work has appeared in *Sample Copy* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1968) and in *Lillabulero* (#6 or #7). His poem "John Mason Gets Sassacus' Head" appeared in *Red Buffalo*, Summer 1921.

DR. NATHANIEL B. EMERSON (1839-1915) was born at Wailua, Oahu, of missionary parents. He was the translator of Malo's *Hawaiian Antiquities*. His most celebrated volume is *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii: The Sacred Songs of Hula* (1909). "The Water of Kane" is reexpressed from Emerson's translation.

JOSÉ-ANGEL FIGUEROA was born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, in 1946. His work has appeared in *Black Creation* and *The Daily World*. "a conversation w/ coca cola" appeared in *East 110th Street*, a book published by Broadside Press, 1971-1972.

DOUG FLAHERTY was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1939. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, and *The Quarterly Review of Literature*. "Snake Rite" was published in *Doones # 2*, 1970.

JOHN GILL was born in Chicago in 1924. His most recent book is *Gills's Blues*, published by the Crossing Press, Trumansburg, New York. He has also edited an anthology, *New American and Canadian Poetry* (Beacon Press, Boston, Mass.) "Something More Ghostly" was in manuscript.

DONALD DUANE GOVAN was born in Minot, North Dakota, in 1945. His work has appeared in *New Black Poetry*, *Ivory Tower Magazine*, *Minnesota Earth Journal*. The poem "Courage" appeared in the book *Fire Circled Rainbows* (Little Animal Press).

JOHN HAINES was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1924. His work has appeared in *The Hudson Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Kayak*, and other publications. "The Traveler" appears in his book *Winter News* (Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1966).

WILLIAM HARMON was born in Concord, North Carolina, in 1938. He is the author of *Treasury Holiday* (Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1970), and his work appears in the anthology *Quickly Aging Here* (Doubleday, 1969). "Adaptation of Nahuatl Lament" was in manuscript.

MICHAEL S. HARPER was born in Brooklyn, New York. His books include *Dear John, Dear Coltrane; History As Apple Tree*; and *History Is Your Own Heartbeat* (University of Illinois Press, 1971), in which the poem "Prayer: Mt. Hood and Environs" appears.

J. C. HOLMAN lives in Tucson, Arizona. "Windsinger" appeared in *Chelsea* 29.

COLETTE INEZ was born in Brussels, Belgium, in 1931. She is the author of *The Woman Who Loved Worms* (Doubleday, 1972), and her work has appeared in *The Nation*, *Antioch Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *New York Quarterly*, and other magazines. The poem "Los Quatros Ijadas De Una Palabra" was in manuscript.

MANUEL JÁUREGUI was born in Denver, Colorado, in 1937. His poem "Untitled" appeared in *Sangre de la Raza* (May 20, 1970).

CHIRON KHANSHENDEL (BRONWEN E. ROSE) was born in Oakland, California, in 1948. Her work appears in *Speaking for Ourselves*, edited by Lillian Ladermand and Barbara Bradshaw (Scott-Foresman, 1971), and *Shadow of the Savage*, edited by Robert A. McGill, which is still in manuscript. She has published one collection of her own poems, *Songs for a Dancing Kachina* (Greenfield Review Press, Greenfield Center, New York). Her poem "Grandfather Pipestone Soul" appeared in *Warpath*, a magazine published by the United Native Americans, San Francisco.

LARRY LINDSAY KIMURA was born at Honoka'a, Hawaii, in 1946. "For Ha'Alo'U" appeared in *Hawaii Review*, December 1971.

ELIZABETH A. KONOPACKY was born in Marshfield, Wisconsin, in 1947. Her work has appeared in the magazine *Impersonal Circus* (University of Wisconsin). "Indian Tutoring Collage" appeared in *Poet* magazine.

PHILIP LEGLER was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1928. He is the author of *A Change of View* and *The Intruder*, both collections of his poems. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, and other magazines. "Campos Santo" was in manuscript.

JUNE LEIVAS was born in Parker, Arizona, in 1950. She is a member of the Chemehuevi Tribe. Her poem "No Indians Here" appeared in the *UCLA American Indian Culture Center Journal*.

MERIDEL LE SUEUR was born in Iowa in 1900. She is the author of *North Star Country*, *Salute to Spring*, and *The Crusaders*. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *South Dakota Review*, and other magazines. Her poem "I Light Your Streets" was in manuscript.

GABRIEL O. LOPEZ was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. His poem "Doing Time" appeared in the newspaper *El Grito del Norte*.

HOWARD MCCORD was born in El Paso, Texas, in 1932. His books include *The Diary of a Lost Girl*, *Maps and Gnomonology: A Handbook of Systems*. His work has appeared in *Partisan Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Kamadhenu*. "A Day's Journey with Geoffrey Young" appeared in his book *Fables and Transfigurations* (Kayak Books, 1967). He co-authored with Walter Lowenfels the prose book, "The Life of Fraenkel's Death" (Washington State University Press, 1970).

THOMAS MCGRATH was born in Sheldon, North Dakota, in 1916. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Nation*, and *Dacotah Territory*, and a number of books of poetry. "Letter to an Imaginary Friend" is from his book of the same name, published by Swallow Press, Spring 1970.

CARMEN M. MARTINEZ lives in New York. Her poems have appeared in *What's Happening*, *The Me Nobody Knows*, and *phat mama*. "ugliness #5" was in manuscript.

RAMÓN MARTINEZ was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1955. He is a high school senior, and "Cow Comes Home" is his first published poem. He has studied writing at summer Communicative and Creative Arts workshops at the University of Arizona.

JOHN MILTON was born in Anoka, Minnesota, in 1924. His work has appeared in *The Loving Hawk*, *This Lonely House*, and in *Poetry North*. "El Turista en El Pueblo" appeared in the book *The Tree of Bones* (Verb publications, Denver, 1965).

N. SCOTT MOMADAY was born in Lawton, Oklahoma, in 1934. His books

include the novel *House Made of Dawn* (which won a 1969 Pulitzer Prize), and *The Way to Rainy Mountain*; and his poems have appeared in *Ramparts*. His poem "Earth and I Gave You Turquoise" appeared in the *New Mexico Quarterly*.

ROBERT NELSON MOORE, JR., was born in Chicago in 1943. His work has appeared in *Wormwood Review*, *Nola Express*, *The Smith*. "An Offering to the Dawn Princess" was in manuscript.

MICHAEL MOOS was born in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1949. His work has appeared in *Crazy Horse* and in *Dacotah Territory*, from which the poem "Cheyenne River Valley" was taken.

DUANE NIATUM was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1938. His work has appeared in *The New York Quarterly* and *Prairie Schooner*, and he is author of *After The Death of An Elder Klallam & Other Poems*. The poem "Ascending Red Cedar Moon" was in manuscript.

MICHAEL R. NICHOLAS was born in Mobile, Alabama, in 1941. His work has appeared in *Mele*, Nos. 4, 6, 7, and 8, and in *Journal of Black Poetry*, Vol. 1, No. 9. "The Unbuilt Sand Castles of Hawaii" appeared in his book *Watermelons into Wine* (Univ. of Hawaii, May 1968).

CHARLES OLSON (1910-1971) was born in Worcester, Massachusetts. His books include *Maximus Poems IV, V, VI*; *The Maximus Poems: Volume Three* (forthcoming); *Archaeologist of Morning*; and *The Maximus Poems* (Jargon/Corinth Books, New York, 1960) in which "Maximus, to Gloucester, Letter 157" appears.

SIMON J. ORTIZ was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1941. His work has appeared in *Alcheringa*, *New Mexico Quarterly*, and *Pembroke Magazine*. "War Poem" was in manuscript.

RONALD OVERTON was born on Long Island, New York, in 1943. His work has appeared in *Sumac*, *Hanging Loose*, *Epos*, and a number of other magazines. His "Found Poems" appeared in *NEW: American and Canadian Poetry* #11, December 1969.

GUY OWEN was born in Clarkton, North Carolina, in 1925. His most recent novels are *Journey for Joede*, nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, and *The Flim-Flam Man and the Apprentice* (Griffin). His poem "Who Speaks For The Red Man?" appeared in *Pembroke Magazine*, 1970.

HAIHAI PAWO PAWO (White Bird) was born at the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation, Belcourt, North Dakota. Her work has appeared in *Akwesasne Notes*, *New Breed News*, and other Indian newspa-



pers. "Alcatraz . . . Lives!!" appeared in *Akwesasne Notes* and *New Breed News*. She writes: "(I write only for the purpose of trying to salve a lagging and very tired spirit). Though I am an Ojibwa, I was given this name through my work with the prison groups for the nation of the Nez Perce."

MARGE PIERCY was born in Detroit in 1936. Her books include the novels *Breaking Camp* and *Going Down Fast*, and two books of poems: *Dance the Eagle to Sleep*, and *Hard Loving* (Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1969), in the last of which her poem "Curse of the earth magician on a metal land" appears.

DAVID RAY was born in Sapulpa, Oklahoma, in 1932. His work has appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Paris Review*, and *The London Magazine*. His poem "The Indians Near Red Lake" was in manuscript.

FRED RED CLOUD was born in Bennetts Corners, Ohio, in 1928. He is of Seneca descent (Iroquois). His work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Wisconsin Review*, and *Voices International*. A book, *Poems and Legends of the Red Man*, is in process. "White Man Says to Me" appeared in *Akwesasne Notes*.

BENJAMIN H. ROGERS was born in Sioux City, Iowa, in 1949. His work has appeared in *Broadside Press*, *The Long View Journal*, and *Was-cana Review* (Canadian). "The Man Above the Land" was in manuscript.

JEROME ROTHENBERG was born in New York City in 1931. His work has appeared in *Alcheringa: Ethnopoetics* ("first magazine of the world's tribal poetries"), which he co-edits with Dennis Tedlock, and in *The New Open Poetry*. His books include *Poems for the Game of Silence*; *Shaking the Pumpkin* (Doubleday, 1972); *Technicians of the Sacred* (Doubleday, 1968), in the latter two of which the poems "Peyote Vision" and "The Dead Hunter" appeared.

MICHAEL RUMAKER was born in Philadelphia in 1932. His work has appeared in *The Nation*, *Red Book*, *ER*, *Cosmopolitan*, and other magazines; he is the author of *The Butterfly* (a novel), and *Gringos and Other Stories*. "Poem" appeared in *Evergreen Review*, # 35.

NORMAN H. RUSSELL was born in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, in 1921. He is the author of *indian thoughts: the small songs of god*, and his work has appeared in *Poetry Northwest*, *South Dakota Review*, and other magazines. "anna wauneka comes to my hogan" appeared in *Midwest Quarterly*, Winter 1970.

LUIS OMAR SALINAS was born in Robstown, Texas, in 1937. His work has

appeared in *Aztlan*, a book by Valdez and Stiener; and in *Speaking for Ourselves* by Federman. "Aztec Angel" is from *Crazy Gypsy*.

RICARDO SÁNCHEZ was born in El Paso, Tejas, Aztlan, in 1941. His books include: *Canto y Grito Mi Liberacion* (Mictla Publications); *Points of Departure* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.); *Obras* (Quetzl Press). His work has been published in *El Grito*, *Quinto Sol Publications*, and others. "Introduction to Abelardo" comes from *Los Cuatro* (Barrio Press, Denver, Colo., 1972), edited by Ricardo Sánchez.

ROBERTO SANDOVAL was born in Taos, New Mexico, in 1950. His work has appeared in *Puerto del Sol* (New Mexico State Press, 1972). "Tight Mouth" was in manuscript.

RUTH LISA SCHECHTER was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Her work has appeared in *New York Quarterly*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, and many other magazines. Her books include *Near the Wall of Lion Shadows*; *Movable Parts*; *Poetry the Healer*; and *Suddenly Thunder* (Barlenmir House, New York City, 1972), in which her poem "Along Missouri" appears.

ARMAND SCHWERNER was born in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1927. His books include: *The Tablets I-XV* (Grossman, New York); *Seaweed* (Black Sparrow, Los Angeles); *The Light Fall* (Hawks Well, New York). His reexpressions of Hawaiian poems were in manuscript.

BOOTS SIREECH was born at Fort Duquesne, Utah, in 1952. He belongs to the Ute tribe. His work has appeared in *Luchip Spearhead*, a publication of the Lutheran Church. "My Son" appeared in his book *Ten Poems*, *The Blue Cloud Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 3, 1969 (Benedictine Abbey, Marvin, South Dakota).

RAY SMITH was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1915. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *University Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and in the anthology *Poets of Today*. "A Fragment for Last Pony of the Dacotah" appeared in *South Dakota Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Autumn 1965), under the title "On the Little Bighorn."

WILLIAM STAFFORD was born in Hutchinson, Kansas, in 1914. His books include: *Traveling Through the Dark*, *The Rescued Year*, *Alliances* (poetry collections, Harper & Row). His work has appeared in *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *New Yorker*, *Poetry*. "People Who Went by in Winter" appeared in *Field* (Oberlin College).

HUGO STANCHI was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1941. "To Buss's Grandma" was in manuscript.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD (1894-1948) was born in Waitsburg, Washington, and grew up in Honolulu, attending Oahu College. She was an editor and the author of a number of books of poetry and her work has appeared in many anthologies. "The Luau" comes from her book *Origin Hawaii* (David Angus, Honolulu, 1947).

PIRI THOMAS was born in Harlem Hospital, New York, in 1928. He is the author of the novel *Down These Mean Streets* and *Saviour Saviour Hold My Hand* (Doubleday, 1972), in which his poem "A First Night in El Sing Sing Prison" appears.

QUINCY TROUPE was born in New York City, 1943. His work has appeared in *New Black Voices* (New American Library); *Black Spirits* (Random House); *Black World*; and in *Embryo* (Barlenmir House, Fall 1972), from which his poem "Red Bone Pot Lunch" is taken.

ROBERT VARGAS was born in Managua, Nicaragua, in 1941. His work appears in *Litteratura Chicana*, *Texto-Contexto* (Joseph Sommers-Shuler) and in *Aztlan* (Valdez-Steiner, Vintage, 1972). His books include *Hispa America* (published in Argentina) and *Primeros Cantos*, a book of poems published by Ediciones "Pochoché," 1972. "Blame It on the Reds" appears in the book *To Serve the Devil* (Vintage, 1971).

CHARLIE VERMONT was born in New York City in 1945. His work has appeared in *Io*, *Big Sky*, *The Paris Review*, and in his book *Two Women* (published by Angel Hair). "Dream" was in manuscript.

JUAN VILLEGAS was born in Harlem in 1954. He is the author of the book *Street Verse'n Some Righteousness* (Manna House Workshops, Inc., 1972), in which "WSLUM Presents" appears.

MARK VINZ was born in North Dakota in 1942. His work has appeared in *The Nation*, *The South Dakota Review*, *The Lamp in the Spine*, *American Dialog*. "Dakota Death Song" appeared in manuscript.

GERALD ROBERT VIZENOR was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1934. His work has appeared in the following anthologies: *The Way: An Anthology of American Indian Literature*, *The Pursuit of Poetry*, and *An American Indian Anthology*. "Haiku" appeared in his books *Empty Swings* (Nodin Press, Minneapolis, 1967) and in *Seventeen Chirps* (Nodin Press, Minneapolis, 1964).

MARNIE WALSH was born in Black Hills, South Dakota. "John Knew the Crow" was published in *Dacotah Territory*, February 1972.

WILLIAM WANTLING was born in Peoria, Illinois, in 1933. His work has

appeared in over 300 "little," avant-garde and underground publications—primarily in England and Wales. "Initiation" appeared in *Nola Express*, 1970.

RAMONA WEEKS was born in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1934. Her work has appeared in *Yale Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review*; in *A Part of Space: Ten Texas Writers*, and *American Literary Anthology* No. 2 (Random House, 1970). "An Aleutian Illusion" appeared in *Descant*, Summer 1970.

JAMES WELCH was born in Browning, Montana, 1940, on the Blackfoot Indian Reservation. His poems have appeared in *Harper's Bazaar*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *Hearse*, and *Kayak*. "Getting Things Straight" appeared in *Hearse* # 14.

TOM WHITECLOUD was born in California (died in 1971). He was part Ojibway. "Thief" appeared in *Akwesasne Notes* (volume # 3, 4).

ANNA WHITE FEATHER was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1938. Her work has appeared in *Io*, *Dharma Continuum*, *Newt*, *Roughshod Animals* and *Amphora*. "Near Tassajara Bon Owl—to be sung" appeared in *Io—Earth Geography Booklet*, February 1972.

NANCY WILLARD was born in 1936. Her work has appeared in *Esquire*, *Antioch Review*, *Audience*. She is the author of "19 Masks for a Naked Poet" (Kayak Press). "I can remember when there were trees" was in manuscript.

KEITH WILSON was born in Clovis, New Mexico, in 1927. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Tri-Quarterly*, *Prairie Schooner*; and he is the author of *Homestead*; *Mid Watch*; *The Old Man and Others*; and *Graves Registry & Other Poems* (Grove Press, New York, 1969), in which his poem "Koyemsi" appeared.

PHILIP WOFFORD was born in Van Buren, Arkansas, in 1935. He is the author of *Grand Canyon Search Ceremony* (Barlenmir House, New York City, 1972). His work has appeared in *El Corno Emplumado*. "The Old and the Young Dance Separately" was in manuscript.

RAY YOUNG BEAR was born in 1950 in Tama, Iowa. His work has appeared in the *The Phoenix*, *Edge* and *Seneca Review*. "Through Lifetime" appeared in *South Dakota Review*, Summer 1971.

## About the Editor

WALTER LOWENFELS, a native New Yorker, was one of the expatriate poets in the Paris of the twenties and thirties when Henry Miller called him "probably *the* poet of the age." Then he stopped writing, returned to the United States, and only resumed publishing in the past decade.

In addition to his own poems, Lowenfels is the author of *Walt Whitman's Civil War* and several popular anthologies including *Poets of Today*, *Where Is Vietnam?*, *In a Time of Revolution* and *The Writing on the Wall*. He is the author of a prose work: *To an Imaginary Daughter*, and has the following volumes of poetry in print: *Some Deaths*, *Land of Roseberries*, *Translations from Scorpius*, a prose book, *The Poetry of My Politics*, and *The Portable Walter*, a selection of his own prose and verse, edited by Robert Gover. His most recent publications are *Found Poems*, published on his seventy-fifth birthday, and *The Revolution Is to Be Human* (1973).

He lives with his wife, Lillian, in Peekskill, New York. They have four daughters and twelve grandchildren.



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—Walter Lowenfels