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## Quiet Truth of History

Nightfall, Overhead the hushed noise of migration  
Apache scouts sleeping with one eye open  
Not knowing which star will betray them  
As they dream—the rivers not deep  
enough to hide the large stones of defeat  
Across the ocean—that they have never seen,  
comes the silent stampede of falling snow  
The cry for justice—stillborn

Hungry boys fiercely clutch broken  
Eagle feathers as they sleep  
The morning star edging closer,  
rekindles the ordinary fear for survival  
But even wild dogs cannot  
outrun all our enemies

The great chiefs of the Crow,  
Cheyenne, Lakota nations ask—  
How many of their brothers died because  
of the poisoned ink on the treaties?  
For the want of peace we have been  
silenced by your gifts of dishonor  
Today are we all not hobbled  
by the white man's medicine  
Death always spits at any apology!

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Vladimir Swirynsky was nominated for the 2002 Pushcart Prize, and his eighth book of poetry, *This Tear Is My Poem*, was recently published by Implosion Press. He performs a one-man show as Edgar Allen Poe, which he hopes to take into the Cleveland school system.

To give them rifles instead of whiskey  
To tell Crazy Horse he didn't  
kill enough white devils

Listen—truth is a straight line  
Follow it!  
Impelled by hunger we have  
bartered away our last breath  
On barren reservations we remain, to  
be photographed as cardboard Indians

Who we were, what we are—  
even peyote dreams cannot  
dispel our anger The land fenced in,  
young bones in need of old remedies, the  
wolf with no escape Yet—our hearts  
remain immense weapons of hope  
The spirits that once walked among us,  
If we ask— will they teach us again?

Beware the White Buffalo—  
there is fire in his eyes  
Listen—do you hear the drums?

—*Vladimir Swirynsky*

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## Wolf Visions

Midnight  
Marauder  
stealing  
    on my dreams  
like mist across the moon,  
leave your message  
and be gone.  
Your truth cuts  
through deep  
    forest dark,  
your knowing eyes  
burning embers  
in coal.

Morning  
    Messenger  
waiting  
    past my dreams  
like an appointed guardian,  
I will hear you now.  
Speak  
    to me  
from depths  
    of reflective pools,  
your guiding eyes  
diamonds  
in the sunlight.

—Delilah O'Haynes

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Delilah O'Haynes (Irish and Cherokee) is associate professor for the Languages and Literature Division of Concord College in Athens, West Virginia. Her publications include nonfiction educational and literary articles for *Tennessee English Journal*, *Tennessee Education*, and the *Tennessee Philological Bulletin*, as well as fiction and poetry for many Appalachian journals such as *The Sow's Ear*, *Potato Eyes*, and *Potomac Review*.

### **American Indians**

Eastern Indians hid among mountains,  
listed "Caucasian" on census.  
Mom said we are Cherokee.  
Dad said we had to be Apache  
because of Mom's temper  
Indian expert said we're Melungeon.  
Ancestry records lost.

Seeking heritage, we go to powwows,  
where whites come for the show.  
We learn to dance, smudge,  
find the drumbeat in our bones,  
sell our red and blonde Indian hair to white  
traders for use in authentic Indian decorations,  
soak up spirituality.

We teach others how to be Indian; now  
we're ready for a trip to the Reservation.  
Non Christian Rez Indians ignore us.  
We are not dying from kidney failure,  
have lost no children to suicide,  
don't drink rot-gut from  
the package store that hovers  
near the Rez entrance,  
have not pawned our souls.

Christian Indians think we're savages  
because we dance and smudge.  
Powwow is a bad word.  
"We do not dance," they say;  
"We do not gather sage."  
Around us: no indoor plumbing,  
no grocery store, no clinic, no school.

“If we keep dancing,” said our elders,  
“we will not die.” So we gather sage,  
then drive into town for the Indian show.  
We don’t have to pay—  
savages dance for free.

Driving back to the mountains,  
we notice Lexus & Mercedes drivers  
hang dream catchers  
from rearview mirrors.

—*Delilah O’Haynes*

## Navajo Country

Emerald Juniper mounds  
dot sorrel plains.  
Like lines of Mohican haircuts,  
red cliff mesas  
guard the horizon.

Among the high rocks,  
shape shifted  
by wind,  
spirits whisper.

One-room log hogans,  
shelter against scorpions,  
mountain lions, rattle snakes,  
hug bronze earth. Outhouses,  
painted red and brown,  
blend against mesas.

Stooped and leathered,  
a woman pats frybread  
over an outdoor fire.  
In hot grease, the flat dough  
rises like plate-sized biscuits,  
and she keeps it warm  
in paper bags.

Brown children ride  
speckled ponies bareback.  
A young woman, her raven hair  
falling like shimmering water,  
etches pottery in turquoises and corals.  
As the red sun nestles into dessert sand,  
children play among junipers, knowing  
every hogan is home.

Like hovering smoke signals,  
clouds promise rain  
to cracked earth.  
Sheep cross rutted roads  
at will, searching gullies  
for spring water.  
Then floods wash mesas,  
clean out gullies,  
widen ruts.

After rain,  
sage perfumes the valleys;  
Navajo tea springs  
from gullies, its yellow  
spike a beacon to gatherers.

—*Delilah O'Haynes*



### Winter Moon

I left behind my mother's quilts,  
my beans ready to pick in the garden,  
my best calico dress,  
walked through the day  
and into many dark nights,  
tears marking my path.

I walked with the sick, the helpless.  
My baby's belly bulged with hunger,  
and I fed her tears for milk.  
When the old ones fainted and fell,  
we carried them.

Wind pushed me.  
Rain soaked my blanket  
and my bones.  
Snow froze my feet,  
burned my face,  
erased my footprints.

I lived  
to replace the lost.

My son was hailed as  
the new hope of our people;  
now his children take white man's  
settlement, drink his deathwater,  
kill each other in the streets.

My silent tears vanish in the dust.

—*Delilah O'Haynes*

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## Hallowed Host

*(from a vision—dedicated to Chief Seattle)*

The eagle flew free then, my brother.

I welcomed you to my lodge, gave you  
food and drink. The prairie was vast  
and there was meat enough for both.  
But your heart was black with hate of me.

You brought food, a peace offering.  
Then you came back in the night  
with your long knives and gun powder.  
The wolf had warned of your coming,  
but I had no such fine weapons.

I fought the last fight of the warrior.  
Though I was strong of heart,  
I was weak, as the orphaned child  
and had not your hatred.  
Grandfather had smiled too much on you.

You tore out my eyes, cut off my feet,  
ripped the beating heart from my chest.  
My blood ran red over all the land;  
the dust received my being, remembered me.  
You burned my lodge, banished my children.

Vultures came to pick my bones;  
they carried my body  
to the four corners of the earth.  
You danced at my death  
and threw my peace pipe on the fire.

Wind blew and storms came,  
but you did not notice.

You slaughtered all the buffalo.  
With no thought of the coming winter,  
you ate of your spoils like a greedy child  
and left the rest to rot on the prairie.  
You grew fat and lazy.

Time passed. You made bigger weapons;  
you made even bigger enemies. Now,  
Grandfather no longer smiles on you.  
My brother the warrior is an old  
woman, but he does not see.

You have cut down the life-giving trees  
and walled yourself up with rock.  
The water you drink is poison, and  
you numb yourself with liquor.  
Your time of decay is no longer distant.

But I will live forever. The wind gathers  
my spirit from the corners of the earth  
and breathes me out over the land.  
Renewed from my rest, I soar high  
in the sky. I touch the Great Spirit.

You could not abide my presence. Now,  
I surround you like smoke from the fire.  
I steal like fog over your silent solitude.  
I am on the wind.  
I am in the air you breathe.

The eagle has returned, my brother.

—*Delilah O'Haynes*