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# Heiau

*Chee Brossy*

*These questions of happiness plaguing the world of picking huckleberries and the laughter of women I have never smelled the rank fur musty smell of bear can you believe just like I have ridden a horse only once in my life in Hawaii on the north shore a small sunburnt lady settled her four-horse corral. If Eddie stops to eat on the trail she hollered after me it's because he's forgotten you're on his back in all that leafy greenness all the thick coily roots and reedy trunks the sharp mountain ridges made velvet by their growth and the smells rich with old earth overripe like the mangoes that fell in our driveway in August oozing into that dark red soil and the lives of ants. What a horse I whisper in his ear what a horse, kii, I say I'm still here and he never steps off the trail instead we saunter on floating and clopping until the prayer mound rises up in a clearing a hill of lava rocks jagged with air holes air of people we will never know a silence inside the silence the sea at the horizon blue. People live here still in their apartments in the city the whitewash gone yellow and outside on the balconies their yellowing surfboards rusted bicycles and potted plants their cars crackling in the sun and I think of my own car fading in the high desert the paint flecking away bit by bit until it is a skeleton whispering. The gray deer this morning eating beside the road big ears skinny head bent low to the shoots of green that have sprung up around what was once a red lake what is now a green and yellow field of weeds the deer calling out to it plunge your heads into the red willows choking the stream. Biih means deer but what did it mean before we came and before you, Apaches, split from us to live in teepees and sing your water drum songs dance arm in arm in a long arc, Cousins, still we talk to you in our language because we know you'll understand the old Hawaiians carried all those rocks to the Heiau and watched them for movement remembering their own long journey across the ocean. Then a*

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woman gets up to sing in the thick morning air full of flower and horse and sweet rot pulled back into the leafy undergrowth and far away coming high on the wind the salty smell of the ocean opening over the rocks the trade winds time to push the boat into the bay and the surf beyond where the whitecaps flare horizon opens wide and far away just visible below the clouds the ghost of another island.

*Author's Note:* These found poems are drawn from recorded interviews with elderly citizens of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation (Interviews 6105 and 7235, *Indian-Pioneer Papers, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries*, accessible at [digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/paper.asp?PID=1528](http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/paper.asp?PID=1528); [pioneer/paper.asp?PID=4274](http://pioneer/paper.asp?PID=4274)).

*James Treat*

## We had some hogs.

We never did put  
killing hogs in pen,  
they just ran outside,  
both summer and winter,  
eating hickory nuts and  
acorns. They got fat  
on these during the  
winter. When we got  
hungry for hog meat,  
we called them, and  
when they came to  
the house, we shot  
them with a Winchester,  
and divided up the  
meat with our neighbors.  
That's the way we  
used to do, but

today if you want a piece of hog meat from your neighbor, you have to pay for it.

*(Jimmy Coffee, June 4, 1937)*

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# Where Muskogee Now Stands

I have seen the country  
where Muskogee now stands  
when it was an open range,  
covered with bluestem prairie grass  
higher than a man's head.

In those days this country was  
a beautiful, free and open country,  
a land of plenty for its people—  
a hunter's paradise, as there were  
plenty of wild game, wild fruit,  
in fact everything to supply  
the needs of the people  
furnished through the natural  
resources of God's creation.

I have lived to see  
a change in this country  
which  
I am unable to describe.

*(Allen Morris, August 18–19, 1937)*