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This poem honors the artistic talents of Harry Whitehorse, Winnebago, well-known Madison, Wisconsin, painter/sculptor whose commissioned works are found in the city's courthouse and park, and as far away as Madison's sister city, Freiburg, Germany. His metal sculptures stand in many Wisconsin cities. In a Madison park that contains protected Native American effigy mounds, Whitehorse carved the remains of a dead hackberry tree, still rooted in the ground after a hit by lightning. The resulting carved totem displays endangered animals (four paws)—wolf and bear—and large, detailed eagle's wings wrapped around a man. This was presented as a totem for all people. At the public dedication of the commissioned sculpture, the participating tribes drew the audience into their dancing.

LEGENDS

Honoring Harry Whitehorse's wood effigy sculpture in Madison, Wisconsin

Approaching the threshold of morning,
headlights expose ignitions of flight
as ceiling thunder steals the flash of fireflies:
 those animated candles that signal floating shrouds
 to trade water for grass in the spoken world.

Witness lumbering bears in lightning
split a Hackberry guarding tombstones
scattering shards of crystal rain balls
from leaves of this living emerald.

 On this Isthmus, fables championed a treasure
through ceremonies leaving no trace
on a circle of air, in an acre of shadow
into smoke-storied spirits changed their shapes.
Altering thistledown they passed through oaks
joining windtrails fashioned to sound
applauding a shadow-turned-image lower to the ground.

Elaine A. Barrett is a freelance writer living in Madison, Wisconsin.

They observed a Winnebago man embrace warm drafts
drawing journeyed creatures from his eyes,
a second-sight genesis imagines that inside
this carver lies; shapes of animal tribes
forming eternal flowing lines, restoring tracks of four paws
that seek only where the Eagle flies.

As day returns pulling life from cold edges,
an Aquila's feathers pattern man's wooden image.
To view this pattern on the earth
find your shadow on the mound that bows
to hushed mellow wind rushing through tree-talk
escaping to silk whispered grass
trailing light filtered canopies,
where memories assemble God returning
our thoughts to this ancestral ground.

As lightning illuminates white clouds in a black sky,
so on earth, *Nature reflects a universe
that is the Creator's carved body:
imaging our character to **Life**—
it autographs our every journey a circuit, every circle a knot that gathers
to every daydream tethering twilight to glow worms:
those lighted compasses in a theatre
where tapered halos capture silence in their cylinder of light,
embracing this illusion of the ether that is night.*

—Elaine A. Barrett



