

## Hybrid

to form the world  
spider woman  
became turtle

dove to the bottom  
of the sea  
and laid two eggs

moon and sun,  
bubbles popping  
to the surface

bursting with light.  
Meanwhile, pea-pod man  
hauling in the tides

caught mackerel  
in his net;  
its pink eye

dawn,  
each silver scale  
a star

its roe  
the rich red soil.

## Dancing Blue Crane to His Mate

That I follow you thus  
delicately lifting  
and setting down again  
each articulate foot  
one after the other,  
ignoring  
the swoop  
and scamper  
of predator  
and prey alike . . .  
what I mean  
by ruffling  
these pale gray feathers  
on my definitively craned neck  
is simply this:  
though earth-bound  
I take wing  
for you,  
never higher  
than when I am down,  
these stilts --  
upon either  
of which  
I can stand alone,  
a miracle  
of stillness --  
become mallets  
with which I serenade you  
upon the xylophone  
of this narrow,  
snow patched  
sword.

## Valediction

Years passed since the mountains broke your heart.

Out of the desert came a plague of locusts

Devouring leaf and shoot.

Birdsong died.

Silence fell over the land

Save for the whirring of arid wings.

Everything changed when the floods came.

In the foothills white tail deer perked their ears

And held still.

White water etched canyons in red rock.

There was no time shorter than eons.

Winds howled and dust blew.

The desert was parched

But birds dropped seeds in oases

Which one day bloomed with lilies

By the water courses.

Life returned and resumed.

When you held my hand those many years ago

I did not know I would grow old and remember every spring

And want to tell lovers not to be so carefree.

Bobwhite in the gloaming,

Flat sun on an eroded stump,

Gnarled trees pushed over by storms

Exposing dirt-clumped roots.

Trunks etched and mossy.

Crotches, knots, stricken branches.

Distant rush of cars. River noise.

Walking today I remember Grandfather

On whose outside glider we used to rock at dusk.

Once, walking close behind me in these woods,

He pointed out a copperhead across the path.

Now, an old man myself, in my mind

Snakes and grandfather have somehow merged.

I remember his stillness,

His wet lips when he kissed me.

## Dakota Poems

### Hinhan̄kaḡa Saḡ Winohin̄ca Wazisaka Okiyake

Waniyetu wikcemnayamni ikiyedaḡ hehanyaḡ  
waḡupi-wi ohna  
isto nitawa ekta wahdi.  
Maḡpiya iwan̄kam manipi  
k'a caḡ tokeca ayapi,  
tka hutkaḡ sutaya he k'a ohin̄ni to uḡ,  
caḡ haḡpi nitawa ohin̄ni wan̄kan ye.  
Šinaokipatapi tahiḡspackiadaḡ ḡi waḡ ihukuya  
uḡkiyotahedaḡ  
ciḡca uḡkitawa istinme,  
caḡ waniyetu akewan̄ḡi icage,  
caḡ haḡpi pahin̄,  
inyaḡ ha ista hoḡhoḡa.

### Ceḡi

Mihuḡka,  
Wica ceḡi kiḡ taku cistiḡna  
ḡka peta cistiḡna caḡ taḡka ideye.  
Wica ceḡi kiḡ ocowasiḡ aideye.  
Wamaḡiḡa ocaḡe owasiḡ wicaḡta wicayuhe,  
ḡka ceḡi kiḡ he tuwedaḡ yuwahbada okihi šni.  
He oḡ unyawaḡtepi, unyasicapi.  
Miniyowe wan̄ziadaḡ etaḡhaḡ mini waḡte  
k'a mini pa.

### Gray Owl to Fir Tree Woman

For almost thirty winters  
in the rice harvest moon  
I have come back to your arms.  
Clouds walk overhead  
and other trees change,  
but you stay rooted and green,  
your sap ever rising.  
Under a brown needle quilt  
between us  
sleeps our only son,  
eleven rings of growth,  
resin hair,  
shale eyes.

### The Tongue

My brother,  
the human tongue is a small thing.  
But a little fire burns a great tree.  
The tongue inflames the whole body.  
Every kind of beast mankind masters,  
but no one can tame the tongue.  
With it we bless and curse.  
From the same spring,  
sweet and bitter water.