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In the Forest

peace turned up loudly
for a moment
with boisterous clomping on forest floors
allegro on pathways over twigs
serenading butterflies with the blues
ears perked dog-like
straining for the chirp of birds
telescope eyes scanned bushes
on the lookout for bears stuffing their bellies
full of raspberries and strawberries
lulling spirit songs
out of honour
in respect because of pity

and then the forest falls
chainsaws and machines rip heavy metal music
trees drop
turn to planks
butterflies flee
die screaming
Chicken Little drops from the sky
worms surface as evergreens fall
mountainsides slide into the river
salmon float belly up
black bears scavenge garbage bins
knee-bent tourists rummage the debris
click, click their cameras
believe they are one with the wild
until they are eaten alive

Google can't help anymore
GPS has a virus
there is no safe place on sea or land or in the sky
labourers scream for solace
drop their faces onto their oil-layered hands
shame is the sound of money exported
angst is for the love of your company

peace dies of cancer

Tk'emlu'ps

inside the brown of skin
sounds never die
a river alive swirls bone
setétkwe — the rapid waters flow
over membrane and within muscle
then lap the tip of the tongue
telling the eyes
melpétkwe — look at my reflection
souls are at the edge of skin
stuttering old river songs
serenading the deaf
owl-dancing with the crippled
calling the impaired to limp
backwards into the vortex

inside the brown of skin
the mind never rests
river songs create new meaning
when the skin is drunk
the tongue wags dysfunction
for the throat is dry love
suicide is lateral violence
puffing on a beaten-down chest
coiled in a fist of words
that can never be taken back
impaling another's soul
and when the dirty work has been done
a crooked, black smile shines
victory
and the rez thrives, the rivers surge

inside the brown of skin
sounds never die

Tk'emlu'ps: the Secwepemc name for Kamloops

High Priests

from the hard corners in my head
I see the cardinals of sin
eating godliness on the red carpets
quilting the streets in the city of angels

I fled to Colorado one thing in mind
I wanted to coward crawl into your soul
cling to you reckless
but then I saw Ginsberg's eyes undressing me

dizzy in my own desperation
I knew Colorado was not for me
the eyes within the Rockies followed me west
and I crumpled the mirrors cupped in my fists

because the face that moved across the mirror was mine
seeking out assassins who medicate cowards
sleeping in LA's streets with beggars and prostitutes
there again, I saw your face in that crowd, your ghost

it began to bend my body into shadows
as I listened to skins bursting on the streets
razors scraped across my forehead
my head was full of the living marching to death camps

I scrawled their names across my back like swastikas
memory revived through my limbs
my vulture eyes scanned the skeletons and corpses
and scavenged stars in funeral processions tromping to LA's
catacombs

and my mouth foamed
so that I became drunk on my own spit
while their words bearing split-tongue hisses
crawled into my ears, Michael Jackson's ears, Stephen
Harper's ears

my face bloated
my jaw ached
my tongue bled poems
my logic crouched in black corners

I realized in the darkness of misunderstandings
they were born to drop to their knees
clawing and tugging at Christian Dior hems
sucking on cocks of dead men outstretched in morgues

there, the undertakers in white coats count the cash
even before the guts are dropped into stainless steel buckets
filling their mouths with sins, disinfecting bodies
embalming them with formaldehyde

they lie stiff on steel beds, faces softened to prettiness
anal cavities and vaginas stuffed with gauze
ready to hide from life as we know it
this is when they ride Harleys all the way to heaven

and at the gates, *On the Road* Kerouac flashed across my mind
my tears pleaded with him to take Ginsberg home
to burn the red carpets in Hollywood
to awaken me as *Howl* once did

and when I forced myself to look away from the mirror
I cleared my head of regrets
forgave them, all of them
and now I sleep in peace

in peace

Idle No More

and what poetry
would Duncan Campbell Scott write
of Chief Theresa Spence?

his words are dead
and have died many lives
in the hearts of other Canadians

all of them meant to live
and destroy
the very essence of aboriginality

December 21, 2012, solstice, a holy day
the day Stephen Harper smudged
himself with rhetoric, laid it down on the dotted line

the day of oligarchic triumph
but for whom?
the colonial handover can never be

Idle No More is a time
to unknot all inhibitions
tangled in the hair of a silenced people

to kill Bill C-45 is not murder
it is what Goya did
when he painted revolutions

it is the will of a hero
a spirit who refuses
an abortion of tribal rights

and so she offers
her life
for the land, the people, all people

Chief Theresa Spence, let it be known —
D.C. Scott has no poetry to write of you
but I do

Rendered Natural

eradication began
with Pope Alexander VI in 1493

divine will
turned acts of piracy into charters and patents

the pope and monarchs laid
the groundwork for colonial extermination

of seventy-two million North American Natives
genocide deepened the pope's love

canonical jurisprudence was the duty
that transformed "savages" into copyrights

butchery and resource confiscation were the first
patents rendered natural

Eurocentric notions framed piracy
and drove their impulses

labour intensified
theft is legitimized capitalism

since Monsanto has replaced the prince
the goal is to discover, conquer and own the souls of
indigenous folk

the duty to Christianize is now interchanged
with the duty to commercialize

thus, the second coming of Columbus is entrenched
with the utilization of biotechnologies

the gift is no longer a few beads, pots and smallpox
but cancer, the mass sterilization of women, and now men

the theft of children in the name of
civilization was the crown

it is the gift of poverty
the bright lights of skid row

the men who drive by seeking
whores in their own mothers

the penitentiaries stuffed full of
indigenous men, women and children

the barbwire that proves
Indians are truly captured

it is the Harpers, the presidents and popes of the world
who anxiously pimp their citizens

in the name of economics
unchanged since 1493