



GHOST DANCE

The world was filling with shadow.
So many people, so many bison had gone west
with crow
into darkness.
The soldiers had killed and killed and killed.
At Sand Creek they slaughtered children,
cut out the sex of the women
and stretched them, drunk and laughing,
over their hats and saddle horns.
But the people were too few to fight anymore.
Whites were everywhere, fencing them in,
so they could not roam like Coyote
gathering the apples of wild rose, snaring rabbit.
Agents gave them seeds and sticks to cut the earth
and cattle that died in winter.
There was no laughter,
only the crying of the young ones
without food, without mothers.

But there were stories that said:
Christ has come among the Paiute
— Wovoka, the Messiah —
with scars on his hands and his feet
where the whites had nailed him up a long time before.
He has come again, the stories said,
to take us to our grandfather,
to take us to a land where we,
the dead and the living together again,
will live in the old ways.
And the whites will all be left behind
to drown in mud and falling mountains.

Black Coyote went to see this man
— Jack Wilson, Wovoka, "Cutter" —
and when Wovoka passed an eagle feather

across the dark emptiness in his hat
Black Coyote saw the whole world
glowing green, wrapped in blue,
herds and herds of bison,
a cedar full of redwings,
and all those who'd died — reborn,
all those still living — young, strong.
Wovoka showed him the dance
that would let them enter into this.
Black Coyote returned.
They learned the dance, made Ghost Shirts
that could repel the bullets of the whites.
Black Coyote told them what Wovoka said:
Dance in a circle singing
and move the dead, move the earth
and she will tremble
and a tide will come, will come
and all the whites and cattle, whiskey, guns,
washed away, washed away
and the people will fly up
on wings of crow, a wind of shadow
dipping into dusk and through to dawn.
Dance, and see those who've died
laughing, waiting there
where the hills are green, so green.
Dance, into the glowing light of a summer sunrise
everyone: sun and moon, morning star and eagle,
everyone, returning to the circle:
fox, cedar, wind, and willow dancing,
mothers, fathers, children dancing
in a circle, singing,

"We are coming,
we are coming,
we are coming home."

CROW'S YEAR

After all the hungry weeks of rain,
the wind whipped nights of winter,
after the delirious spring,
when Crow, enamored with its light,
dreamed of bringing Moon to Earth,
after the broken shells and fledging of summer,
whole delicious days of sun,
when Crow flew to the edge of the world
and nearly drowned playing chicken with the surf,
after gorging on apples and worms in fall,
the sky closing with early darkness and rain,
after the feathers, lost in escapes
from cats and owls, have grown back,
after the crowing of gossip each evening
has been forgotten in the rustle of sleep
and then recalled at dawn,
Crow has circled back, flying now,
so tired, so tired,
into steady snow, the light all but gone,
able only to strain out one flap more,
glide to a branch, fold wings, close lids,
and find, at last, the rest.

Now cold crawls down each feather shaft,
sneaks into the hollow bones.
The snow seems stopped in the windless air,
the ears hear nothing,
the heart pauses, waits between beats.

Deep in a lung, where the in-breath's held,
where air exchanges gifts with blood,
a sound will be born on the next exhale.
If voiced, what shape will it take in the throat,
the mouth, before the beak parts
and it passes through?
Will it be a soft ululation that lulls back to sleep?
a glottal caw that cracks the night open?
a rising murmur, arousing wings
to lift and stir the air?
Or will it be unvoiced?
Whispering, *Crow*,
when the next flake falls,
fly, fly, fly.

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WINTER GEESE

As first light leaks along the east
the geese arise as one,
circle up in the cold clear dawn
and commence their wild chorus:
gahonk, gahonk, gahonk.

Vees form, scatter, regather.
One flock drops to graze on the grass,
another flies up to rejoin the calling swarm.

Above the human world they wheel,
Finding space to winter
between the roads and towns.
For them:
No need of gifts, of money,
or even tales of birth, of hope.
Just this morning,
the winter sun now spreading
across the flooded fields.

Their flapping wings life them
into the light.
Their honking carols fill the air.

Just this. Enough.

Come in Out of the Rain to the

10th Street
Market
in the pacific rim gallery

Featured artists at the Pacific Rim 12th St. Gallery in Astoria through March 31:
Chris Bryant ★ Bobbie Jansen ★ Ray Colleran ★ Nancy Carruthers
Reba Owen ★ William Voxman ★ Denny Adams ★ Keiko Makadate
Barry Sears

ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY

The Alliance for Democracy is a new movement
that seeks to end the domination of our economy,
our government, our culture, our media and the
environment by large corporations.

We have united to examine the ways in which various economic
interests either enhance or harm the health of democracy
and we focus on creating basic change.

Piecemeal reform has been rendered ineffective. We seek
deep systemic alterations to establish economic and political
democracy.

End
corporate
rule;
revive
democracy.

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LOVE IN THE ASHES

"It seems the lesser cannot comprehend the greater."

~Sven Birkett, criticizing Margaret Salinger's memoir of her father,
J.D. Salinger ('Catcher in the Rye').

"The effort of the lesser to comprehend the greater is what goes on in
nearly all biography and criticism."

~Judith Shulevitz, in reply (on 'Slate' Internet Chat Radio, 9/21/2000).

Perhaps I can in the lesser mode critically evaluate an original sculpture by
V/Lott (aka Viki Ott) of Astoria, Oregon: 'Two Fucking Cigarette Butts in an Ashtray'.
She warped two filtered cigarette butts (Camel Lights) into erotic intercourse in
an ashtray with faces made of tumbled glass heads painted with mouths, noses and
eyes; the 'male' has a yellow face and the female's is red. 'She' has pink rhinestone
breasts and her vagina is a blue glass bead with a hole superglued to the filter. The
male penis, inserted into the glass bead vagina, is a tubular length of shiny black glass.
Navy blue wire is twisted in embracing arms and wide apart legs.

The ashtray, which acts as their sexual bed, is a clear cut crystal Art Deco
design, octagonal, the corners slashed from a square design at each end with furrows
on top to hold lighted cigarettes while the smokers drink wine or engage in the preliminaries
of seduction.

The idea came to V/Lott when a friend said he hoped to see only two cigarette
butts in her ashtray when he visited her again. This was an encouragement that she
only smoke two cigarettes a day. She replied that there would most certainly be only
"two fucking cigarette butts" in the ashtray.

'Two Fucking Cigarette Butts in an Ashtray' should be exhibited anywhere and
everywhere all of the time until finally resting on permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian
if the Louvre is shortsighted and neglects to.

Visitors to V/Lott's apartment in an old Astoria house above Marine Drive along
the Columbia River, are often unsure how to comprehend her original sculpture.

~MICHAEL McCUSKER