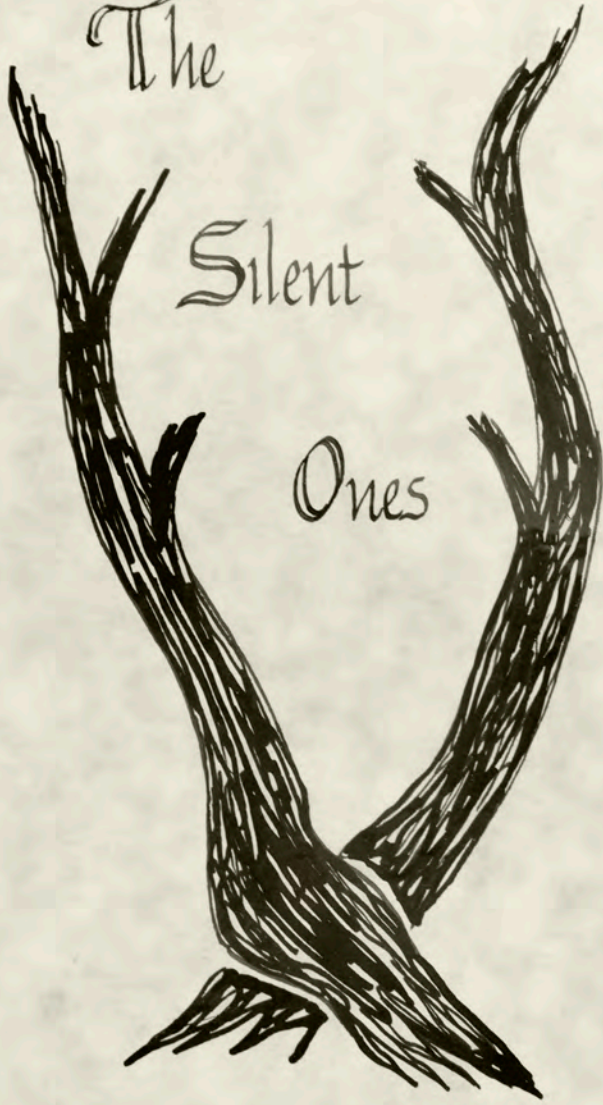


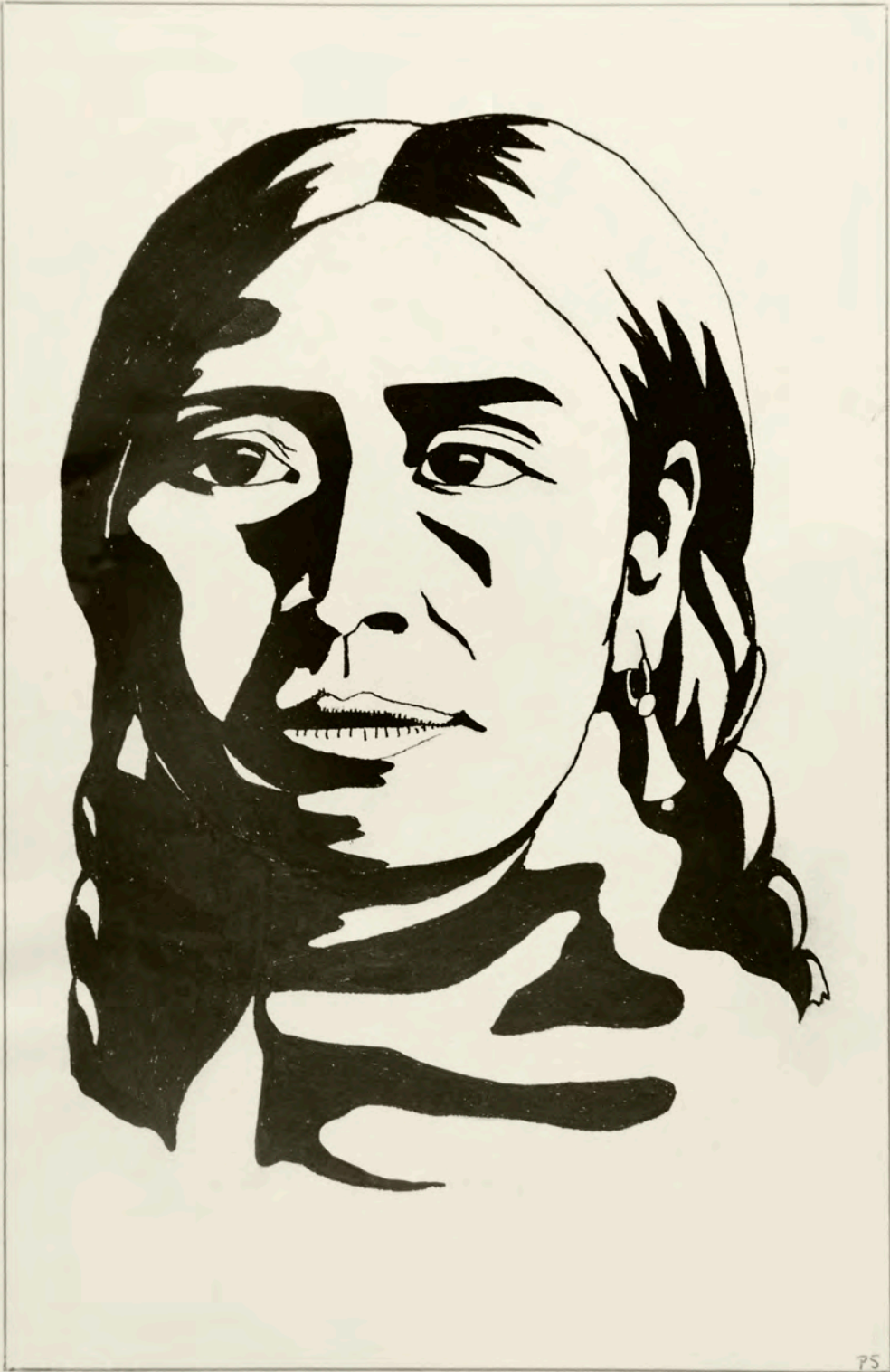
The Silent Ones

J. M. SWANSON

The
Silent
Ones



by P. SWANSON
jan 83



long and long ago we knew our gods
our forests rivers skies ~
we know them still though strength of hours
grows through faded signs ~

wolf and eagle totems hung from clouds
in harmony with buffalo and hawk ~
the rain was thought and in our songs
the rhythm that was wind ~

now the silent ones we are not gone ~
our ghosts live in the greyness of your streets
we race in fields windows won't reflect
and autumn fires weave your printed lawns ~

aging totems walled museum still
bear testament to truths that were our power ~
our silence grown silver ~ still we live ~
for long and long ago is ever now.

east by north algonkian tribes
from great lakes through to maritimes
by river woods for hunt to fish
the muskegs rocks and conifers ~

wigwam nomads come for gone
canoe the summer rapids all
with winter paw of bear for shoe
toboggan packing cold by snow ~

lines of snares to wake the trap
for rabbit beaver porcupine
with bow for arrow caribou
and moose bear bird where life demands ~

with reverence to manitou
honour worn is skin by claw
while bone by quill to dress in warm
with leggings mitts and moccasins ~

pickeral sturgeon pike to eel
by net by trap by bone of spear
to fish by ice the winter hole
or night of fire birch canoe ~

late and sooner call the drums
that travel message far by wide
and song to spirits place by time
that guide the hunter hand by eye ~

always there is manitou
to walk the secrets of the soul
where every child grows to seek
the breath that is their consciousness.

flesh and blood i am the earth
worm burrowing through damp ~
long reeds spiking out of marsh
lands swept deep in grass ~

nerves and skin i sing the song
mosquito driven sky
born fly to fly i multiply
the spider grown web ~

sight and sound i am the breath
that sparks in wild eyes ~
lashed fish by fowl through my bones
my voice contains their cries ~

thought and touch i circulate
the lives of one life known
like flower opened glimpsed and gone
to seed where others come.



people long through houses grown
cradled lakes by five and land
for farm the fertile forests hunt
in deer by skill of iroquois ~

tobaccos cropped to pipe of truth
and sisters three the fields walk
in corn poled beans for squash to run
with wampum power of exchange ~

dark dance held like secret night
full false the faces of the dream
where men of medicine in herbs
work magics weathered to the cure ~

lacrosse game gamble hours free
with peace by plenty on the fire
and turtles rattle in the sing
by water drums to flute the song ~

safe by safer league of chiefs
to guard the garden of the sun
for clay paint pot and dance to rain
the honour of a harvest moon,

soon too soon
october race on wind
to carry harvest home
the pumpkin moon ~
grey sound the wave
walled in by greyer sea
with smoke of breath
the summer of farewell ~

what is not seen
the voice has yet to say
in secret fires roasting
shelter from the rain ~
golden olden faces
thrown strange by flame
feel the eyes of memory
pull winter closeness in.

where grass grows flat like plate for bowl of sky
find chiefs of many tribes that each may be
in black feet belly big add enemies
with poor dressed skins where people cook with stones -

all one language in the sign while prayer
marks bison for the jump of the corral
with squaws bound drying tanning long by warm
to jerky pemican and rawhide homes -

circles cone the tipis transient
where breechcloth warriors paint from skin to hide
white red yellow black the secret shapes
of four winds shaman known curse by faith -

waiting strong in pit for eagle gold
then horse by dog by back to pack the move
with rivers hidden dry near slight of trees
for willow bows to swift the arrowhead -

laughter stories songs by silent names
whistle rattle drum the melodies
that carry memory outside of days
to know no when exists until it comes,



know the buffalo
like mother that is earth
her fur the warmth
her flesh the sustenance
her bones the instruments
white wisdom horn ~

her children drink
the strength of energies
through sacred love
no more no less than peace ~

know the buffalo
like rock like tree like field
freely giving
body that is soul.

must of lakes that rises dawn
to feel the wind to be like wind
the dusk of lonely calls the loon
and summer rolls the hills in flower -

north by forest musk ox hide
bounded tundra lichens spare
beside the dwellers in the rocks
the copper knives the pointed skins -

cradled hunger by the hunt
to move to move in test with land
the bitter in the cold of cold
the short of heat mosquito long -

slaves by hares by beavers trap
the lines where snares net by taboo
and miles hunting fence by gap
for moose for elk for cariboo -

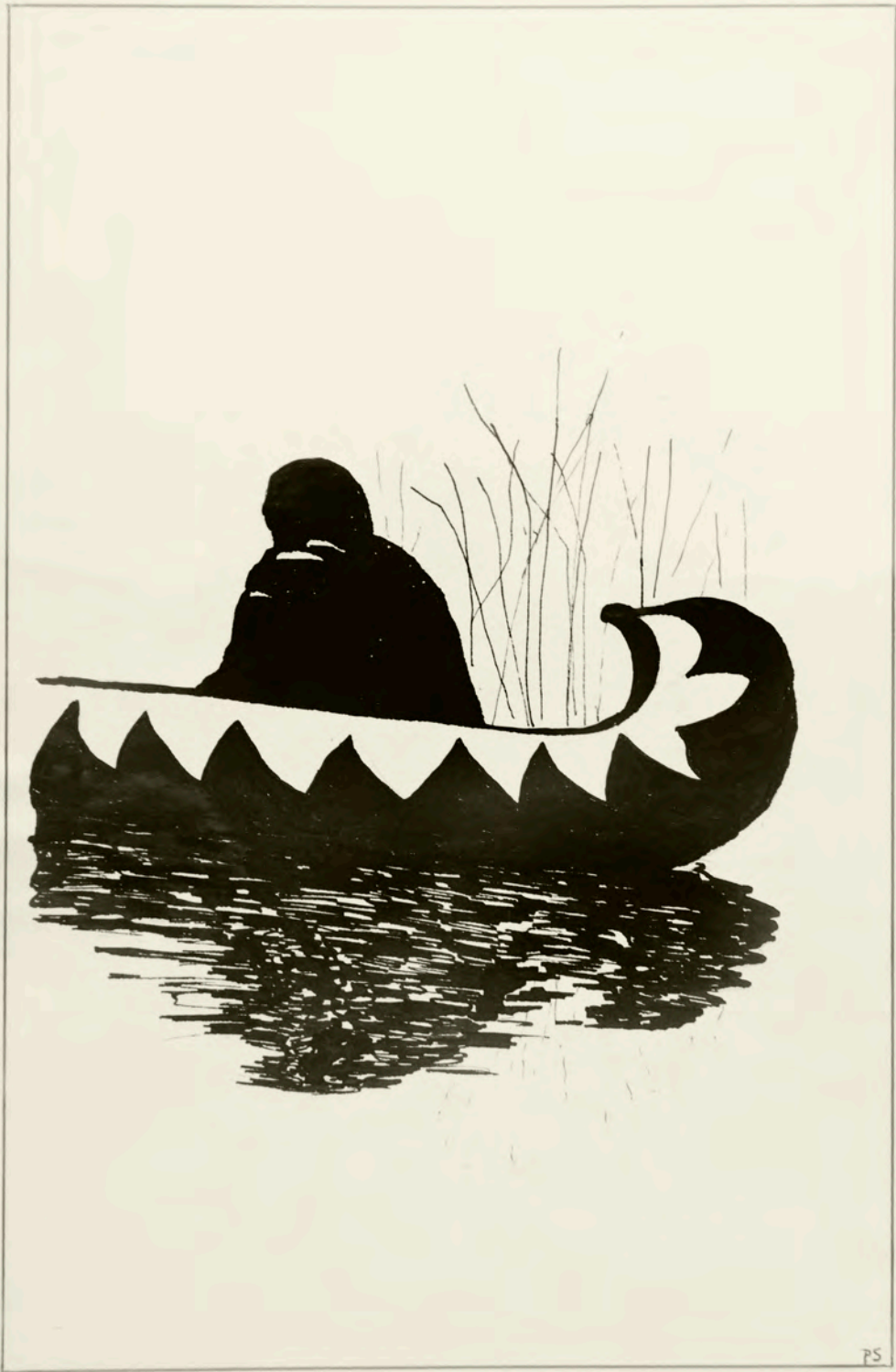
tree the cache and bark the skin
to foil the claw of wolverine
where snowshoes point or small canoes
find lean to branched between the hides -

spruce to land of little sticks
guardian spectres each to know
driven harsh where hard survives
between the wolves and northern sky.

learn the wheel of medicine
all begins that all will end ~
all that ends ends to begin
the wheel of medicine in spin ~

the sky in circle to the stars
galaxies control the curve
the spirals that are cloud recall
the whirls that are wind ~

life of man from child to child
seasons spin between the moons
inside the circle of the palm
the power of the world.



summer smoke
we spin the golden eye
in a mirage of years ~

there was ~ there is ~ will be
an answering of smiles
thrown outward from the core ~

rises break light
never twice the same
out of promise never stilled ~

we smell the earth
and trace the winding grass
until the eye is filled.

mountain rock to mountain coast
fir and pine and rattlesnake
the peoples of the river man
know salmon gopher mountain goat ~

with wild onion strong to root
and berry summer rich in spread
for straw and rasp and saskatoon
to dry to feast to celebrate ~

rite of salmon first to come
to fish by river lake canoe
with arms worked honour in tatoo
where skins dress red white paint to joy ~

summer tipis winter home
dug by hill to underground
to know the cache of pit and tree
in meat smoked fish find warm by snow ~

with careful ritual the hunt
for grouse deer bear moose live by know
the charm that guides the arrow skill
with spirit guardians of dream ~

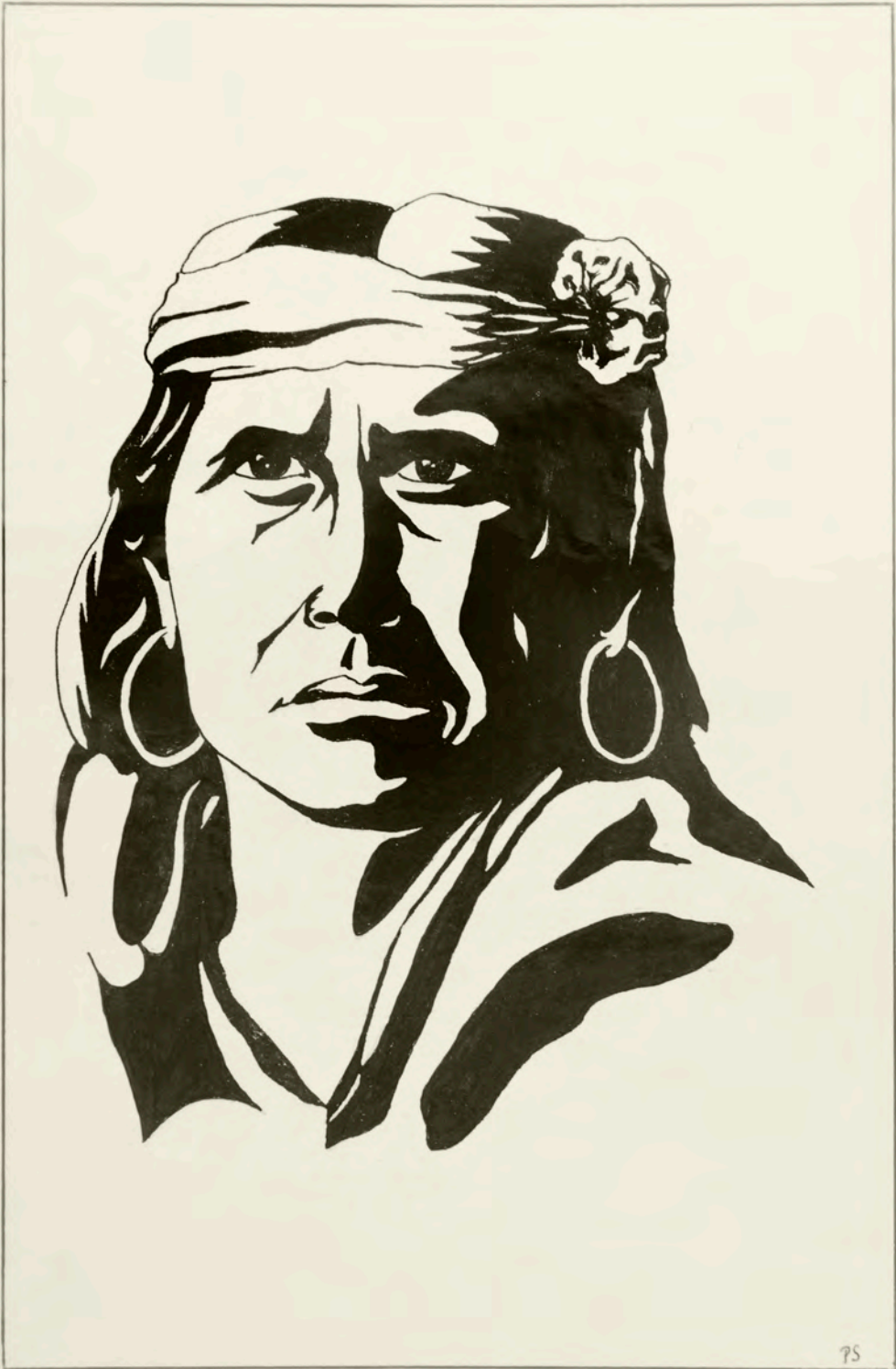
necks laced tooth by claw by seed
where bush tobaccos rest the smoke
while stories spin the fire song
through visions of a collective mind,

myths of being myths of dreams
celebrate the thunderbird
napewa wrays jokes between
legends of what might have been ~

great the spirit of the sun
brother to the earth the rock
the moon the winds the buffalo
honoured dance and sacrifice ~

dance to know midsummer sun
dance among the ghosts of smoke
dance the old man to the dawn
with woven tales through the dark ~

myths propel beyond the source
that riddles the spirits of the mind ~
words grow wild out of song
to live the vision that is being.



west the mountain ocean plunge
with long coast fingered in fiords
dense rains forest underbrush
and islands scatter afterthought ~

here the cedar houses planked
long by wide rectangle rows
here the cedar heart of strong
grows skill of giant dug canoes ~

troll by lure the salmon catch
tight by nettle fibred net
while halibut by lines of kelp
find hooks by stones of ocean floor ~

spring wakes oolagans to smoke
to dry the summer herring runs
seaweeds berries clams to fern
and clover roots by long of sun ~

seal and whale the harpoon hunt
while mountain goats leap wool in weave
with cedar bark the cloth to dye
in patterns yellow black bluegreen ~

nose pierced ears for shells bones beads
with neck wrist ankle ornaments
calm meets war meets work meets play
with night with day intensity.

south west north east
heart thought wisdom spirit
look within to look afar
earth moon sun star ~

self family kindred world
infant child adult aged
inward is the outward eye
crawl walk roam fly ~

cry hope pray laugh
love be do create
circles widen by the sky
earth water air fire ~

mouse bear bison eagle
wider wider wider spiral
dream illusion vision peace
south west north east.

spring and summer fall collect
chief and noble freeman slave
gather winter into feast
of offerings met chief by chief -

wealth of blankets slaves canoes
potlache challenge to return
while masks race fires shadow strange
to cast the secret rite of names -

war paints insult by surprise
attack in gain of scalp and slave
while ritual taboos command
the ghost that lifts the rising hand -

gamble sticks by dice by skill
where stories string the cradled cat
with rattles clappers drum and chant
the shaman sacred to the dance -

totems crest in ancestry
raven eagle fish by shark
beaver bear and man grow one
in legends born outside of time -

charchol ochres yellow red
artists echo carpentry
copper greens and white of clay
speak mask and bowl mythology -

spirits pulse the waves of rain
of fire rock of earth of wind
to catch through medicine of man
the power bursting life through dream.



tribe follows tribe
we know no wilderness
our calm the rock
our movement lightning ~

we celebrate
through being to explore
the mystery
of spirit that is earth ~

fierce bear teaching
wealth in medicines
in night owl
wisdom gentle ways ~

frog in watchfulness
swift hawk prey
grey wolf hardihood
gallantry of elk ~

all places pulse
shining lake illusion
shadow hills
whispering of pines ~

dark cloud secrecy
full moon strength
morning star to wake
the energy of wind ~

nation follows nation
worlds change
there is no death
our voices speak between.

the world is the spirit
manifest ~
creating
to be one with universe ~

from four winds
directions spiralling
a thousand fragments
magnify within ~

that which is
rides clear on the unseen
the outer world
lives counterpart in dream ~

from one spirit
four ~
earth air wind fire ~
from four spirits
life in life implodes.

circles drawn
quarter way around
not understanding
where the lines begin ~

two worlds meet
like faces in the night
lit by a moon
few eyes could conceive ~

two lives evolve
like counterparts of one
half a world between
the rising setting sun ~

a strange land grown
as a meeting ground
towards a future
no one can define ~

laughters touch
by chance that is not chance
in greening mountains
sun above the mist ~

a reason for
each step that moves beyond
the furnished trails
of a sleeping mind ~

a hundred handshakes
write their histories
where no one knows
the reason for a name ~

circles drawn
one third way around
not understanding
where the lines will end.