

SONG OF GENERATIONS

I am the son of white slave owners
and black maids,
dead Union soldiers
and abolitionists,
a signer of the Declaration of Independence
and the English aristocrats who hated him.
All live inside me.

In my body
runs the blood of Cherokee people
and implacable Indian killers,
fundamentalist Christian ministers
and Indian, Celtic, and European pagans,
powerful political physicians
who outlawed alternative medicine
and midwives and herbalists.

Irish freedom fighters and English soldiers,
Irish, Scottish, Dutch,
English, German, Austrian,
farmers and peasants, rich industrialists -
Landowners!
All live within me.

My body is made of the soil,
rocks,
trees,
and air
of this North American land.

My mind has been formed
by human beings out of long years of history
and continents I have never seen,
my spirit forged by the hand of God,
the sweet, singing breath of the Pipe,
and the upwelling, sacred power of Earth.

The heady rhythms of tribal Africa,
diluted by ocean miles and four hundred years,
were rocked into my body
through the sweet smells and gentle walking
of my grandmothers' maids.

The songs of Ireland,
muted by distance and generations,
still sing melancholy, sacred wisdom in my blood.
The primal pipes of Scotland
call me still to stand with my people,
and Cherokee plant song
stirs me to dawn awakening.

Over and above them all
thunders the sacred song of Universe
and of Earth.
It is a cacophony of sound
or a great symphony of the song of humankind
and the sacred
in interblended harmony.

Sometimes,
simultaneously,
it is both.

It would be easier,
perhaps,
to be the son of unblended,
tribally-pure, father and mother,
whose healthy purity
stretches back to the dawn of time.
I, their whole expression.
But there are few of us
that can make such a claim.
We play the hand
that Creator has given us.

But. . .
is there not beauty
in such a song of interblended harmonies?
Such a song of generations?
Do not our ancestors still live within us?
Cannot the discerning eye see them
in the turn of a phrase,
the movement of a hand,
or the glance of an eye?

Cannot the discerning ear
hear them come secretly in the night?
Their soft whispers filling our darkened bedroom?
Are we, ourselves, anything more than this
in some future time and person
whose name we cannot know?