

Poetry

LONG WAY FROM HOME

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ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature. Vol.25:1.

Long Way From Home

I've walked these hallways
a long time now
hallways held up by
stale smoke
thoughts

I've walked these hallways
a long time now
hallways pallored by
ivory-coloured
thoughts

I've walked these hallways
for a long time now
hallways without windows
no way to feel the wind
no way to touch the earth
no way to see

I've walked these hallways
a long time now
every September closed doors
stand at attention
like soldiers

guarding fellow inmates
guarding footnotes

guarding biases

as I walk by

I do my footnotes so well
nobody knows where I come from
hallways without sun
the ologists can't see
they count mainstreet
bodies behind bars
they put Ama's moosebones
behind glass
they tell savage stories
in anthropology Cree

My fellow inmates
they paste us prehistoric
standing in front of us
as if I am not there too
as if I wouldn't know
what they think they show
showing what they don't know
they don't know what they show
they take my Cree for their PhD's
like Le Bank
as my Bapa would say
they take our money for their pay

When I first came to these hallways
I was young and dreaming
to make a difference
thinking truth

With footnotes pen paper
chalk blackboard
I tried to put faces
behind cigar store glazes
I tried to put names
behind the stats
of us brown people

us
us brown people
in jails
in offices
in graveyards
in livingrooms
but to them it was
just Native biases

I've walked these hallways
a long time now
hallways hallowed by
ivory-towered
bents

way too long now
hallways whitewashed with
committee meetings memos
promotion procedures
as fair as war
pitting brown against colonized brown
choosing pretend Indians

When I first came to these hallways
I was young and dreaming
to make a difference

but only time has passed
taking my Ama and Bapa
my Nhisis my Nokom
my blueberry hills
I've walked these hallways

a long time now
I wanna go home now
I'm tired of thinking for others
who don't wanna hear anyways

I wanna go home now
I want to see the evening stars

get together for a dance
the northern light way
like Ama's red river jig
I want to see the sun rise
hot orange pink
like Bapa's daybreak fire

no one could see the morning come
as my Bapa
no one could scurry in the stars
as my Ama

I wanna go home now
but where is home now?

I do my footnotes so well
nobody knows where I come from
my relatives think
I've made it
they don't know
how long I've walked these hallways
my feet hurt
at 43

I wanna play hookey
but I can't
I have credit cards to pay
footnotes to colonize
My relatives think
I've made it
they don't know
who all owns me
they won't lend me money
from their UIC's
my relatives laugh.

Oh I did my footnotes so well
nobody knows where I come from

I've walked these hallways
with them a long time now

and still they don't see
the earth gives eyes
injustice gives rage
now I'm standing here
prehistoric and all
pulling out their fenceposts of civilization
one by one
calling names in Cree
bringing down their mooneow hills
in English too
this is home now.