

Indian Heaven Suite: Elegy of Fall

Prelude: Night Sky.

Gathering winds have scattered constellations.
The Milky Way drifts like a cloud.
The dipper stars are scattered.
Its water spilled fills these thousand lakes.
The Great Bear broken into many fragments --
each, wanders, hunting, restless in these hills.
Through hemlock trees each star set free
flees wildly westward from the dawn.

I. Dawn

Dawn brings ravens
crying "fire" as they fly.
The wind whips in their wings
and silver jets glide high above
their trails, like vandals razors, cut the sky.

II. Day

Flowing down through reddened meadows,
rocky streams, all silent in the fall,
trail paths of stones in jagged rows
along their springtime runs.
And huckleberry fruit falls bright blue below
grasses waving golden in the sun.

III. Evening

A couple camps beside a lake:
She picks berries idly by the shore;
his hand hangs slack from stroke as he bathes --
retired fallen twins
with mortal children grown.
Now one will put the other in a grave.

IV. Bright Morning.

With tiny white circles on miniature black claws
like finest painted porcelain
a fluttering jay grips tightly
to my finger as he flaps as if to fly
yet not to come or go
but celebrating natural joy
you and I may never know.

for haunting fears we've never faced.
He flutters on my finger
with white patterns on his legs like finest lace.

allegro

Three birds take rye bread from my hand,
come into my camp to beg,
This joyous one, the bravest,
has a badly crippled leg.

V. Sky at Noon

With wings and tail like old upholstery
finely patterned faded browns and reds
the colors of the fall she circles
soaring high above my heads
alone against the sky.

Looking up from Indian Heaven's highest peak
I lift my eyes from distant views
of meadow-ways of deer and bear,
of lakes that I have slept beside
and higher still from snowy peaks --
Mt Hood, St Helens, Adams, Ranier --
she circles higher round me
until I'm sure I'm seen,
till time is gone.
I touch her with my longing --
god above and just this soaring hawk between.

Coda

Looking in the mirror of the Indian Heaven sky
I see in broken constellations
how I've wandered blindly through the years.
and my soul awakes with a piercing raven's cry
and a vision of my wholeness
amid weavings of my sadness --
the stars themselves my own immortal tears.

Paul Bergner, September 1991
Indian Heaven Wilderness Area