

Blaze VOX 2k9

Late Spring 2009

Rodney Nelson

COMER TO THE HILLS

A moment of trail in the badland dust went on
to noon with buzz of redwing when it crossed a draw
yet earth had an uptilt that no undirected
eye could have made out might have felt at a sideshow
of lark buntings where prairie turned into weald
one yellow tree to more

an outline of the hills

ahead did not shade in all the way became
just gray as if to mute any relation the word
black had had in the comer's mind and retain
an abstract of them until immediate mountains
were there

a moment of trail in the pine and elk-
dung scent went on to midafternoon with dimness
thinning up toward what to earlier men had
been the center of the faint-green world that now lay
everywhere yet nothing ended at the top

MATO PAHA

I did not invite the May heat but
it was eager to meet me in loud
American Sturgis
the town too
quiet in fact at midday
my tongue
not dry enough for a visit to
the Broken Spoke
anyway I had
had an eye on a knot of land that
rose to the north
Bear Butte
during my
slow ride in out of the hills
now I
reached the trail to which the government
had added cut step and iron rail
where it went acute or dicey
were
Indian
pilgrim flags around
a
holy site
government signage claimed
one young man had made it to the top
already was needling
tying a
cloth object
we did not say howdy
or how and I turned to each of the
four directions without arm movement
or word
nodding only
wood platform
at the summit of a
laccolith
warm not hot
bright-dun
Maka Sicha

way out there in view

I hoofed back down
and whether anything had happened
in me on that rock where the broken
spoke

or were they

I did and do not

know

but had no notion at all to
lay the dust when I rode through Sturgis

MATO TIPILA

Wyoming had been a warm tan otherwise
with pine high on it
 an otherwise of the
horn but now in a northern corner the day
was saying rain
 not saying
intimating
 in
mist you could not hear that had hidden the
top of what you had ridden to
 Bear Lodge
 or
 Devil's Tower
the army name and you did
not know how much you wanted to do of it
 would not
have climbed on a sunny day either
 they
of whichever name would have hated that
so you hitched at the trail that went around and
had a clockwise walk
 no one
up there
 wet
 the
quiet and breath of ponderosa
 toward
the information end half of the
prayer ribands were Japanese
 you found a
book to write your navy or any name in

HINHAN KAGA PAHA

For one that has walked so much mountain
the ponderosa do not misgive
and the trailhead is only a door
of return

 pine shadow and outcrop
in the light are the givings of a
home that one has come back up to and
retaken even if the mountain
be particular

 the summit of
granite needle unknown
 even the
rock tower is waiting to pivot
anyone that wants to have a look
around at the earth and the cold in
its wall may seem familiar

 one
that has walked so much mountain need not
go down aware that man once named the
peak for anima of owl

 not when
one has homed on the pivot and watched
unwinking in terms of any time

BELOW THE TOWER

All fire in Mato Tipila was stone
and quiet above the pine and Maytime green
of earth that in a cutbank showed a minding
red and when night came to the Americas
the robin did not show it either yet joined
with many to make a thrush cantata on
into dark in the waterside grove and quit
because the darkening would not continue
which let rocks' silence out and down to betake
night through but now a not-much wind would music
a minute in cottonwood leaf and somewhere
among cloud and leaf in the Americas
the only blue moon of May would be turning