

Flies Buzzing

By Mark Turcotte

somewhere in america, in a certain state of grace . . .

Patti Smith

As a child I danced
to the heartfelt, savage
rhythm
of the Native, the
American Indian,
in the Turtle Mountains,
in the Round Hall,
in the greasy light of
kerosene lamps.

As a child I danced
among the long, jangle legs of
the men, down
beside the whispering moccasin women,
in close circles
around the Old Ones,
who sat at the drum,
their heads tossed, backs arched
in ancient prayer.

As a child I danced away from the fist,
I danced toward the rhythms of life,
I danced into dreams, into
the sound of flies buzzing.
A deer advancing but clinging to the forest wall,
the old red woman rocking in her tattered shawl,
the young women bent, breasts
drooping to the mouths of their young, the heat
hanging heavy on the tips of our tongues,
until the Sun
burned the sky black, the moon
made us silvery blue and
all of the night sounds, all of the night sounds

folded together with the buzzing
still in our heads,
becoming a chant of ghosts,
of *Crazy Horse* and *Wovoka*
and all the Endless Others,
snaking through the weaving through the trees
like beams of ribbons of light,
singing, *we shall live again we shall live,*

until the Sun and the Sun and the Sun and I
awaken,
still a child, still dancing
toward the rhythm of life.

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

Mark Turcotte, "Flies Buzzing" from *The Feathered Heart*, published by Michigan State University Press. Copyright © 1998 by Mark Turcotte. Reprinted by permission of Mark Turcotte.

Source: *The Feathered Heart* (Michigan State University Press, 1998)



Mark Turcotte was raised on North Dakota's Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation. After attending school in Lansing, Michigan, he lived on the road for nearly 15 years. Turcotte moved to Chicago in 1993, where his literary career was given a boost by Illinois Poet Laureate, Gwendolyn Brooks, who awarded him the first Gwendolyn Brooks Open-mic Poetry Award and named him a Significant Illinois Poet. Much of Turcotte's work deals with his personal experience straddling the line between the cultures of natives and whites. He reveals the harsh truths of prejudice and emphasizes the importance of knowing one's cultural heritage.

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