

OLD OKIE WIND

The tall he-wind rides Oklahoma's bony spine  
inventing weather, sorting through layered grains  
of time, regaling roofs with whisky tenor arias.  
He shoots a shiver down in cotton fields  
and rummages red cedars on gypsum hills.

He tangles with the twirling she-wind hauling off  
a silo, makes her drop it on the interstate.  
They rest a spell together, laughing  
at what they've seen of men-- the search  
for gold and get, the boomer/sooner race  
for what the natives knew could not be owned,  
just loaned. And once, threading through  
the buffalo grass they witnessed how close  
De Soto came to meeting Coronado.

They mull how early Spanish settlers saw  
so little worth in "crooked-backed dark cows"  
or reddish skin, how boots and hoofs drummed over  
oil and zinc beneath hot sagebrush, sand  
and mesquite mounds. And did the Spanish flag  
taste different from the French?  
They marvel how the flag of statehood lasts--  
despite the rips and tears from a century  
of windy tongues.

The she-wind winds away to quarrel with night  
and rain, remembering the troughs of dust,  
the flaming human eyes, the grind  
between the teeth. Ah, men forget so soon.

The he-wind strokes the Ouachitas  
till they subside in blue-stem prairie east.  
Curator of the past, the folkscape, landscape,  
lessons of the hungry plow, he reigns supreme  
above all other surface airs-- the round white wind,  
the Cherokee and pale wheat wind.

He pushes up the red-tailed hawk to hang above  
Black Mesa, rakes across the granite Wichitas  
connecting yesterdays with now. He circles  
hoarded light, dishevels shadows  
without impeding morning prayers  
or knocking hope off course. And sometimes softly  
tells a Choctaw child, an aging Irish rancher,  
a college girl-- some secrets of tomorrow.