

THE WHEELWRIGHT
For Duane Niatum of the Klallam

Who is the keeper of the ancient dream wheel?
Who carries it across the broken plains
and over the scarred back of the sacred mountain?
My sister has asked me again.

Has she tasted some taint I can't sweeten?
Is the dream wheel a victim of too many feathers
or paint peels and beer cans? Maybe it burned,
maybe its ashes are scattered in overgrazed valleys,
or mixed with cement of dams that block the salmon.

She finds me frowning at dawn. My little sister,
who shuns electricity and temperature controls,
has tended her mounded fire all night to unearth
satin-black pots incised with lightning. My thoughts
are strewn on morning's rim, easy for her to scan.

"Smile, my brother. I have the dream wheel."
I tease her, "Did you make one of clay?"

"How like you to be literal. No, it's here
in the mind's rings that grow and store like trees.
In the cupped hands that mold beauty.
In the heart that shapes hope, endless
as cycling seasons. Wind its streamers around
your wrist to take root, feel it whole
with your pulse. Never let it roll out of sight."

She walks away beaming like the waking sun.
We are bound in a circle of light.

--Glenna Holloway